

**AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS:
A RESPONDENT PERSPECTIVE**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS: A RESPONDENT PERSPECTIVE

This study formulates a proposed framework for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Specifically it attempts to establish the role of the public sector in the governance and management of rural tourism; to develop an index of criteria against which rural tourism projects can be evaluated; to suggest how such evaluation could be implemented; and to establish with whom the responsibility for the management of the evaluation process should rest.

A Delphi Survey comprising 60 panellists from Britain and South Africa, a focus group held in South Africa and eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted in South Africa and Britain were utilised in developing the evaluation framework. A panel of experts, drawn from the academic, public, consultant and operational sectors, have consensually developed an index comprising criteria pertaining both to the macro-impact of rural tourism projects on the host environment and to micro issues impacting the commercial success of individual tourism projects.

Respondents indicate that the public sector has a pivotal role in guiding and supporting the creation of an environment conducive to the development of the rural tourism sector. This role is envisaged as most compelling at local government level. Although the onus for the evaluation of rural tourism projects is perceived to rest with local authorities, lack of capacity at this level was identified as a major constraint.

There is evidence that rural tourism operators generally lack business and operational capacity and that training is a vital element in ensuring the commercial success of the sector. In recognising the value of the concept of utilisation-focused evaluation as a tool for building capacity and generating information for utilisation by project operators and local authorities alike, the study suggests its adoption at the individual project level as an integral element of the rural tourism development process.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY AND ITS OBJECTIVES

Introduction

Rural tourism, frequently regarded as an easy development option for the generation of income and employment, is characterised by unrealistic expectations of the benefits it brings to rural areas. Governments, in both developed and less-developed nations, promote rural tourism as an instrument of socio-economic development. For example, in Britain, the government tourism strategy Tomorrow's Tourism (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 1999:66) propounds that 'tourism has tremendous potential to benefit local communities, especially where traditional industries or agriculture are in decline...and to maintaining the economic viability of local businesses through diversification such as farm tourism'. The Countryside Agency (1999:1) equally posits 'tourism is a key sector of the rural economy that brings jobs, economic advantages and social benefits to rural communities'. In a less-developed country, such as South Africa, government also asserts that 'tourism brings development to rural areas...tourism allows rural people to share in the benefits of tourism development' (Government of South Africa, 1996:16). There are others who also adopt a positive orientation, boosting expectations of rural tourism as a development option. For example, the World Tourism Organisation's (1996:6) claim 'rural tourism to the rescue of Europe's countryside' and Gannon's (1994:59) argument that 'tourism offers the rural world a second chance'.

As opposed to this tourism academics (for example Butler and Clark, 1992) warn that rural tourism is unlikely to be a sustainable development option on which to base a weak rural economy and that the sector should preferably complement a local economy that is already thriving. Saeter (1998:244) is also sceptical of the supposed benefits of rural tourism declaring that 'when politicians and planners...emphasize the indirect effects of tourism there is more rhetoric than reality'. Furthermore, as McKercher and Robbins (1998) point out, from the perspective of individual operators it is the weakest members who determine the overall strength of the sector. A factor, as Roberts and Hall (2001:193) argue, that points 'to the responsibility of

all businesses to contribute to the development of a strong and economically sustainable sector'. Yet, many rural tourism businesses are not profitable and difficulties in attracting funding are exacerbated by a lack of experience, business skills and training (Getz and Page, 1997). Expectations of the benefits of rural tourism have thus tended to be over optimistic, a factor that scholars find unsurprising in view of the lack of academic studies to serve as a guide in this field (Butler and Clark, 1992; Hall and Jenkins, 1998).

The aim of this study, which is exploratory in nature, is to investigate the possibility of formulating an evaluation framework, encompassing an index of generic criteria, for application in the development and management of rural tourism projects. It should be noted that while the terms 'evaluation' and 'assessment' are used interchangeably throughout the literature, this thesis uses the term 'evaluation' unless directly quoting another researcher. This study also explores the idea of implementing evaluation in rural tourism projects, based on Patton's (1997) theory of utilization-focused evaluation, as a tool for generating knowledge at both the individual operator and the local authority level, and for building the capacity of the rural tourism sector at a wider stakeholder level. To fulfil these aims the following objectives need to be accomplished:

- 1) Establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism;
- 2) Develop an index of criteria for utilisation in the implementation of evaluation in rural tourism projects;
- 3) Suggest how the evaluation of rural tourism projects should be implemented;
- 4) Ascertain respondents opinion as to which stakeholders should participate in the evaluation of rural tourism projects; and
- 5) Determine with whom the responsibility for the management of the evaluation of rural tourism projects should rest.

Tourism scholars highlight the use of evaluation as a tool in managing the development of tourism. Despite this, few evaluation studies appear to form an

integral part of tourism development practice. Nevertheless, Hall (2000) alleges that systematic evaluation is becoming a more common constituent of tourism policy and planning. However, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) contend that the importance of evaluation lies not only in its technical correctness, but also in how the evaluation results are used. The emphasis on the use of evaluation findings in the utilization-focused evaluation approach suggested by this thesis is congruent with this contention.

Luloff et al (1994), finding that there was little information pertaining to any rural tourism programme's success or failure in terms of economic or social impact on the local area in rural America, advocate the need for evaluation as an integral feature of rural tourism development. They argue that existing data pertains only to general indicators, such as traveller counts and visitor days, which cannot provide the detailed information necessary to establish whether tourism is in fact a viable rural economic development strategy. 'Prior to, or at least concurrent with, the promotion of a programme of rural tourism as an economic development strategy, better evaluations of current efforts are needed' (Luloff et al, 1994:62). Other tourism scholars (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998; Wall and Dibnah, 1992) also support the use of evaluation and posit that developing tourism policy and plans without regular, systematic evaluation of tourism at local level negates the value of the entire process. Wall and Dibnah (1992) decry the fact that, despite the potential for extending knowledge and understanding, evaluation studies in tourism are seldom implemented. Numerous authors (Dearden, 1993; Middleton and Hawkins, 1998; Nelson, 1993; Payne, 1993; Wall and Dibnah, 1992) emphasize that it is at local level that monitoring, evaluation, planning and management of tourism should occur, so that these practices may be adapted to the on-the-ground realities of different areas in which developmental, environmental, economic and sociocultural characteristics are liable to differ.

It is as the purveyor of information, both at the individual rural tourism project and at the local authority level, that this thesis suggests the implementation of evaluation in rural tourism. Nelson (1993:5) suggests that any decision-making relating to tourism must consist of a set of interactive and interconnected processes that include

understanding, communicating, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and adapting. Understanding, Nelson asserts, is the key to which all the other processes are interrelated. The utilization-focused evaluation suggested by this thesis comprises all these processes. Utilization focused-evaluation is based on a mutual understanding amongst stakeholders (including decision-makers) of the purpose and benefits of evaluation and of its design, the data collected, and the meaning of its findings (Patton, 1997). The communication of evaluation findings and their utilization in implementing change for improvement is a central tenet of the utilization-focused evaluation philosophy. Nelson (1993:10) argues that a 'top-down approach' to monitoring and evaluation is exigent and recognises the importance of introducing 'monitoring and assessment at the firm as well as the local government or community level'. This thesis similarly recognizes the potential of utilization-focused evaluation, implemented at the individual project level, as a mechanism through which to generate wider understanding of both rural tourism projects and cumulatively of rural tourism at a wider local authority or community level. The properties of utilization-focused evaluation are discussed at length in Chapter Three.

Butler (1993) argues that understanding both the relationship and impact of the tourism product on the resources on which it is based and the strategies in place to control the development, impacts and change that occur in the dynamic tourism environment is imperative. However, he perceives gaining an understanding of 'the views of the actors involved' as equally important (Butler, 1993:27). The fragmented nature of the rural tourism sector, and the mounting number of actors within the rural tourism arena, renders the determination of who should be classified as legitimate stakeholders in rural tourism problematic. Jamal and Getz (1995:188) define stakeholders as 'actors with an interest in a common problem or issues and include all individuals, groups or organizations directly influenced by the actions others take to solve a problem'. Gray (1985:922), however, argues that to be 'perceived as legitimate, stakeholders must also have the capacity to participate'. To fulfill Gray's criteria the challenge is thus to build both the knowledge and the decision-making and participation skills of stakeholders (Jamal and Getz, 1995).

In the context of evaluation Nelson (1993) agrees that finding a way through which the various stakeholders can share opinions on the interpretation and implication of criteria, evaluation and its outcomes is a necessity. He, however, cautions that reaching accord on issues of evaluation and the interpretation of its findings is likely to be difficult since tourism involves a multiplicity of diverse stakeholders with conflicting opinions and agendas, which may prove to be irreconcilable. This is significant to the topic of this thesis since Rubin (1995) points out that perception of what comprises a successful project is at variance amongst both individual stakeholders and different stakeholder groupings. Patton (1997:41) describes stakeholders in a utilization-focused evaluation as 'people who have a stake – a vested interest - in evaluation findings' but agrees that such interests will be diverse and conflicting. He thus advocates that the list of stakeholders should be narrowed to a 'specific group of primary intended users' whose information needs should form the focus of the evaluation (Patton, 1997:42). Utilization-focused evaluation is thus a participatory process that strives to actively and intimately involve stakeholders and include issues of importance to them. The varying approaches adopted by evaluation scholars with regard to inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process, and the argument of who should be classified as stakeholders, are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. To gain further clarity on this issue an attempt is made to ascertain respondents' opinion as to who should comprise the stakeholders to be included in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The results of this enquiry are included in Chapter Eight.

Locating This Study

Nelson (1993:261) argues that the significant question is not whether monitoring and evaluation should take place in the field of tourism but 'what data and criteria should be used, by whom, according to what scheme and why? What, if any, should be the theoretical basis...what is the market for the result?' This thesis attempts to answer these questions and to contribute to a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the commercial success of individual rural tourism projects and their impacts on the wider social, economic and physical environment in which they are located. Whilst other researchers have developed indicators for the measurement of various facets of tourism (for example Harris and Nelson, 1993; Miller, 2001) no

previous study has developed a holistic index of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Neither has any previous study suggested a theoretical framework through which to implement such evaluation nor where the responsibility for its implementation should lie. This study does and also attempts to identify potential stakeholders for participation in the evaluation process.

This study has been significantly influenced by Patton's (1997:6) theory of utilization-focused evaluation the main tenet of which is 'narrowing the gap between generating evaluation findings and actually using those findings for program decision-making and improvement'. Utilization-focused evaluation shifts the focus from one of measuring and judgment to one in which the focus is on learning and improvement and the generation of findings that provide useful information for action (Patton, 1997). In addition to achieving the objectives of this study, it is hoped that the findings of the research will provide a practical tool for local authorities and individual project operators in enhancing understanding and improving the management of individual tourism projects and cumulatively of rural tourism as a sector at the local level.

In conducting this study a series of complementary research methods was utilised to source information and feedback from a diverse body of rural tourism experts. A three round Delphi Survey, which sought to identify and prioritise criteria for inclusion in the proposed index of criteria, was conducted between October 2001 and October 2002. Participation in the Delphi Survey was sought from expert panellists in both South Africa and Britain. It was considered important to ascertain whether the problems and peculiarities of rural tourism projects were unique to South Africa, as a less-developed country, or whether the criteria perceived as important in the evaluation of rural tourism projects were similar in a developed country such as Britain. The selection of South Africa and Britain specifically was based on several factors. The researcher's rural tourism experience was gained in South Africa. This facilitated access to South African respondents for the study. A dearth of tourism research in South Africa also means that this study is potentially of practical value in the rural tourism field in that country. A comparison of Britain and South Africa was

considered apposite in view of historical ties between the two countries and the fact that British travellers comprise South Africa's largest foreign tourism market sector. From a practical perspective the fact that this thesis would be completed in Britain, and that English is the researcher's home language, also made Britain a logical choice.

Serafin et al (1992) argue that successful generation of criteria, which centre on advancing mutual understanding and agreement, calls for involvement of diverse groups with disparate interests and values. In an attempt to accommodate this diversity research respondents were selected not only from two different countries but also from four different stakeholder sectors of expertise – academics, the public sector, consultants and the operational sector. The index of proposed criteria, developed by respondents, for the evaluation of rural tourism projects thus incorporates a diverse perspective. Shadish et al (1991:85) define criteria as 'descriptors of an evaluand (that which is being evaluated) that bear on its capacity to meet needs' whilst indicators are the 'standards of acceptable performance on the criteria of merit'. To give a simple example: the creation jobs for local people would be a criterion of merit for rural tourism projects. The number of jobs created would be the indicator that would measure the project's success against that particular criterion. As discussed in Chapter Eight, criteria could be selected from the index of criteria, developed by respondents, for use in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. This index is not presumed to be either definitive or prescriptive but to serve as a guideline to rural tourism stakeholders. The Delphi Survey was followed by a second phase of data collection comprising a focus group session in South Africa in October 2002 and seventeen semi-structured interviews conducted in South Africa and Britain between October 2002 and April 2003.

The Research Context of Rural Tourism Projects

Rubin (1995:14) contends that 'project' is the most commonly used term to describe any development activity. Tourism projects may be owned, funded and managed by the public or private sector, NGOs, or communities (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). They may also be partnerships, joint ventures or collaborative undertakings. This is

elaborated on in Chapter Eight. Projects may be very small, for example a bed-and-breakfast establishment or a single product such as a cultural performance. They may equally comprise an amalgam of tourism products. A single operator may, for example, own bed-and-breakfast accommodation, organize horse-riding trails, keep mountain bikes for hire and run a guided minibus tour to a local attraction. The project may also be a purpose-built resort, such as Centre Parcs, providing a wide range of tourist facilities and services. Public sector tourism projects might comprise the development of a conference centre, recreation facilities or an information center amongst others. Tourism projects are thus heterogeneous in terms both of form and mode of operation (Wanhill, 1994). Some projects, for example those providing accommodation facilities, require a physical structure such as a building or a tented camp. Other projects, such as white-water rafting and fishing or canoe trips, require only equipment and human resources. Still others, such as one day guided hiking trails, will require only the human element (Mill and Morrison, 1992). These contextualities of size and scope, together with the location of projects and their stage of development add to the complexities, documented in Chapter Eight, of implementing evaluation in rural tourism projects. However, for the purposes of this study the term 'project' is operationalised to include all rural tourism businesses, regardless of their ownership structure, that encompass tourism and hospitality attractions, activities, facilities (such as accommodation and restaurants) and services (such as transport and tour operations).

The scale of rural tourism in an area is determined by an amalgam of individual projects that, together with the natural landscape and local lifestyle, collectively constitute the tourism product on offer at a destination. Lane (1994a) propounds that rural tourism should be comprised of 'small-scale enterprise'. However, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a small, medium or large business/project in the tourism sector with definitions predominantly numerically based in terms of numbers of employees and occasionally, in the accommodation sector, the number of rooms (Komppula, 2002). Numerical classifications, however, differ substantially dependent both upon the location of the business/project and the sector in which it operates (Van Diermen, 1997). Most relevant to this study is The European Commission categorization of a micro enterprise as one employing less than ten people, a small enterprise between eleven and forty-nine and a medium sized

undertaking more than 50 but less than 250 (Thomas, 2000). Furthermore, this thesis is in agreement with Storey (1994) that the distinction between small and large businesses/projects is more operational than numeric. Significant differentiators in smaller operations include greater market uncertainty, smaller client base and the propensity to develop niche markets. Management approach, organisational skills and modes of operation also differ substantially. What is common to all businesses/projects is the imperative of clear goals and objectives, pre-implementation feasibility studies and three-year business and marketing plans, factors that are frequently neglected by small tourism operators (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999).

It is argued that the success of individual rural tourism businesses is fundamental to the realisation of an industry that attains its goals as an agent of economic development (Roberts and Hall, 2001). Networking and integration into the local economy are considered imperative, yet it is alleged that rural tourism operators generally focus solely on their own businesses rather than considering how they might actively contribute to strengthening the local economy. This factor is liable to diminish their contribution to both the rural economy and host community (Roberts and Hall, 2001). The paucity of research pertaining to small and medium sized tourism businesses is acknowledged (Komppula, 2002; Page et al, 1999; Shaw and Williams, 1994; Thomas, 2000). Jameson's (1996) suggestion that future research should be undertaken from a ground-up perspective is compatible with the concept of evaluation at the tourism project level suggested by this study. Page and Getz (1997) allege that studies of individual rural tourism businesses in general are not well developed. They point out that tourism is characterised by a lack of supply-side research and ascribe the lack of definitive studies that generate knowledge of how tourism businesses operate to the reluctance of individual operators to divulge detailed information. They further argue that researchers commonly adopt a case study approach with little comparison between cases or attempts to integrate findings in order to develop a holistic picture that furthers the understanding of the potential benefits and impacts of rural tourism businesses, and the criteria fundamental to their success.

Hall and Jenkins (1998) argue that one of the policy instruments available to government in the development of rural tourism is the allocation of funds with which to evaluate its economic, environmental and social impacts. They further allege that such action will yield information that is not only valuable to government, but also to the private rural tourism sector. The evaluation of individual rural tourism projects, apart from environmental impact assessments or the feasibility studies conducted as part of an application for funding, has, however, been a subject of less interest to researchers, leaving gaps in the knowledge of how to evaluate at the project level. This thesis argues that it is the information procured at this 'grass-roots' level that will be the most valuable in building a composite picture and developing new insights and understanding of the complex mosaic that constitutes the rural tourism sector. The assertion that 'ideally, a project evaluation framework is required, to identify, evaluate and integrate all the positive and negative impacts of a proposed venture' (Hartley and Hooper, 1992:22) is thus supported by this study which believes that the utilization of such a framework may assist in filling the prevailing knowledge gap identified in the literature. The complexities and lack of understanding of rural tourism projects are further compounded by the fact that there is neither a commonly accepted definition of the term 'rural' nor of what comprises 'rural tourism'.

Concepts of Rurality

Interpretations of the terms 'rural' and 'rurality' are varied. Many sociologists argue that 'rural' is a socially constructed concept (Halfacree, 1995; Mormont, 1990, Short, 1991). Mormont (1990) for example, perceives rural areas as a series of overlapping social spaces, each with their own structures and actors, which need to be understood in the context of the meaning ascribed to them by their users. Cloke (1992) in turn argues that the countryside, its communities, and the images of rural culture are all commodities that can be packaged and sold. Others (Dann, 1997; Lowenthal, 1993; Squire, 1994) point out that in much of the developed world the tourist penchant for rural tourism is nurtured by a hankering after childhood memories, the envisioned tranquillity of the countryside and a desire to recapture the old-fashioned values, perceivedly forfeited in the pressures of modern society. To such tourists rural extends beyond a physical or spatial concept to a construct symbolising an ostensibly simpler, more genuine lifestyle, a refuge to which urbanites can escape. It is further

argued that the loss or decline of this 'rurality' is a potentially significant cost of tourism development (Bourke and Luloff, 1996).

Other definitions are related to the use of rural landscapes. Robinson (1990), on the one hand, asserts that key features of rurality are a land-based economy and large wide-open spaces. Cloke (1992), on the other hand, alleges that rural landscapes are put to multiple uses ranging from national parks to theme parks, and agricultural production to heavily pollutive industries driven from urban areas. Conversely, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1993:11) divorces its definition of rural from any specific land use stating that 'rural is a territorial or spatial concept. It is not restricted to any particular use of land, degree of economic health, or economic sector'. The OECD definition is simplistic, yet it is perhaps the most universally appropriate. The concept of 'rural' and 'rurality' as a tranquil sanctuary from the stresses of urban life is reflective of the love of the countryside in Britain, and indeed many other European and Western nations. However, to vast populations in many less-developed areas of the world, such as South Africa, rurality speaks of hunger, poverty and a degraded environment. It is in such areas that tourism is desperately sought as the key to socioeconomic upliftment.

Governments generally define rural in terms of population density, yet there is no numeric consensus that distinguishes a rural or an urban population (Robinson, 1990). For example, numeric descriptors of rural settlements in Scotland are based on local authority areas of less than 100 people per km². Yet, in England and Wales, which lack a formal definition, the Countryside Agency bases their description on settlements of less than 10,000 inhabitants (Roberts and Hall, 2001:11). In the South African context defining what comprises 'rural' is extremely complex. A conglomeration of 30,000 people living at a distance from the nearest urban area (a town with a business area and general facilities and services) and whose primary economic activity is subsistence agriculture is arguably rural despite its population density. Many towns and villages in South Africa have small permanent populations and are, by virtue of their location and activities (predominantly agriculture and in some cases tourism), emphatically rural. Yet their black township, situated five

kilometres away as a result of pre-democracy legislation that entrenched the racial divide, has a far greater population. It is difficult to rationalise that the township should be classified as urban when their economic survival is dependent on employment in the village and on surrounding farms. Sharpley and Sharpley (1997:20) conceptualise rural as 'all areas, both land and water, that lie beyond towns and cities which, in national or regional contexts, may be described as major urban centres'. This definition, which confines the descriptor of 'rural' within the parameters set by the degree of urban development as opposed to numbers, thus accommodates the South African dichotomy.

Conceptualising Rural Tourism

The complexities intrinsic to the term 'rural' are no less daunting in seeking a definition of the rural tourism phenomenon (Lane, 1994; Oppermann, 1996; Page and Getz, 1997; Roberts and Hall, 2001; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Descriptors of rural tourism span a continuum from fairly restrictive to all embracing. For example, Deroi (1991:4) defines rural tourism as tourism in a 'non-urban territory where human (land related economic) activity is going on, primarily agriculture. A permanent human presence seems a qualifying requirement'. The definition of the European Commission (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997:8) on the other hand includes 'not only farm tourism or agritourism...but all tourist activities in rural areas'. The fuzziness is compounded by the widespread diversity of the sector and the tendency to use the term 'rural tourism' inter-changeably with ecotourism, green tourism, nature tourism, agritourism, farm tourism, soft tourism, sustainable tourism and alternative tourism (Keane et al, 1992; Lane, 1989). As illustrated by Lane's (1994a:9) definition, several of the aforementioned could in fact be categorised as sub-sectors of rural tourism, which:

Includes farm-based holidays, but also comprises special-interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and in some areas ethnic tourism. There is also a large general-interest market...where a major requirement of the main holiday is the ability to provide peace, quiet and relaxation in rural surroundings.

Although Lane's definition covers a wide range of tourist interest and activity, he restricts this broad-spectrum by arguing that in its 'purest form' rural tourism should

be small-scale, with traditional features and developed for the benefit of the host area (Lane, 1994:14). According to this argument large-scale tourism developments, for example resort hotels in a rural locality, are not strictly rural in nature.

A review of other authors (Aronsson, 1994; Bramwell, 1994; OECD, 1994; Page and Getz, 1997) recurrently exposes the fact that rural tourism projects are envisioned as small-scale, community-based, connected with and controlled by local residents. Slow and organic in growth with extensive links to other sectors of the rural economy such projects are perceived to be ecologically sensitive, traditional in character and purveyors of local products, craft and culture. The social interests of host communities are also perceived to be better protected by tourism projects that are small in scale and widely dispersed, than by those which are extensive (Peck and Lepie, 1989). Butler (1999:69) elaborates on this argument claiming that 'small-scale developments can generally be integrated into communities and systems more easily than large complex developments which make major demands on local resources'. Conversely, Gill (1998:98) argues that 'single developments are often of particular significance in rural areas, and a single major development may be seen as the base for sustaining the viability of a community, rejuvenating a destination area...and for putting a rural area on the map'.

Following Gill's assertion it can thus be argued that if tourism is to be regarded as a key contributor to the rural economy and purveyor of benefits, such as jobs, to rural communities, then large-scale projects must qualify as rural tourism. For example, it is recorded that in England each Centre Parcs village generates 100 jobs worth in excesses of £7 million per year to the local economy in salaries and wages (Tribe et al, 2000). Local purchases of goods and services create another 140 indirect jobs. Tourism attractions in the vicinity of the villages have also benefited as a result of visitation by Centre Parc guests (Tribe et al, 2000). In South Africa, the large-scale Sun City resort complex has brought jobs to a marginalized rural community and turned a previously unknown rural area into a world-renowned tourism destination. However, it is true that the majority of rural tourism businesses are small-scale and it is these businesses that, as Middleton and Hawkins (1998:61) affirm, 'determine what visitors appreciate of the attractions provided, and the value for money provided'. Middleton and Hawkins (1998:63) further stress that 'the long-term

prosperity of destinations...is uncomfortably in the hands of thousands of small businesses'. Evaluating individual rural tourism businesses/projects is thus fundamental to understanding the costs and benefits each brings to its host environment.

It is acknowledged at the outset that the intentions on which this study is grounded are idealistic and that the acceptance of evaluation by tourism developers, operators and the public sector, will be difficult to achieve. Haywood (1993:235) avers that 'evaluation can't help but be tied to the concept of values, which are unlikely to change overnight'. Most operators are primarily concerned with profit maximization and, as Mowforth and Munt, (1998:199) point out 'the profit maximization motive does have a tendency to subvert and subjugate other considerations, ethical and environmental'. The prioritisation of profit as a primary value is borne out by the findings of this research in which the business orientation of rural tourism projects is repeatedly emphasised. Despite these difficulties there is evidence that consultant and operator members of the Delphi panel in South Africa are already utilizing the Delphi questionnaire as the basis of their own evaluation of new rural tourism projects in which they are involved.

The Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter Two undertakes a review of the literature with the purpose of identifying key issues for comparison with the findings of the research. Firstly, the role of the public sector as propounded in the literature, and its responsibilities in the development of rural tourism, are critically examined. Findings of the research in this regard are presented and discussed in Chapter Five. Secondly, the impacts of rural tourism on the wider host environment are analysed. These are related to the index of criteria developed by respondents pertaining to the macro impacts of rural tourism in Chapter Six. Finally, the factors propounded by tourism scholars as vital to the commercial success of individual rural tourism projects are investigated. Chapter Seven presents the findings of the research in this regard, and makes comparison with issues raised in the literature. The issues discussed in this chapter are key in relation to the first two objectives established by

this study – establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism; and develop an index of criteria for utilization in the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Chapter Three deliberates the nature and theory of evaluation and probes its practical application in rural tourism projects. The chapter examines the diverse theoretical approaches expounded by leading evaluation scholars and defends the recommendation of Patton's (1997) utilisation-focused evaluation as the most appropriate approach for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. It also analyses the potential benefits of the application of evaluation in the rural tourism sector. Finally the chapter discusses two studies undertaken by other researchers in developing indicators for use in evaluating various aspects of tourism.

Methodological issues are dealt with in Chapter Four. The research approach adopted is outlined and the methodological problems encountered, and their resolution, are discussed. The adaptation and refinement of the research approach in the light of considerations arising as the study progressed are also considered.

Chapter Five presents the findings derived from data analysis that establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism. Results highlight the problems and conflicts, the resolution of which is perceived as fundamental if the public sector is to fulfil its role in the development and management of rural tourism.

Chapter Six presents the findings of the research relating to the proposed index of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The criteria presented in this chapter pertain to the macro sociocultural, socioeconomic and environmental impacts of rural tourism on the wider host environment. The importance of the commercial success of rural tourism projects is emphasised as essential if host communities are to reap the benefits of rural tourism development.

Chapter Seven presents the criteria, generated by respondents, that relate to the internal aspects of project planning and management that should be included in the

suggested index of criteria against which rural tourism projects can be evaluated. The importance of sound financial planning is particularly emphasised and the lack of business and marketing skills amongst rural tourism operators highlighted.

Presentation of the results in Chapter Eight has been divided into three sections. The first comprises the findings of the research with regard to the implementation of evaluation of rural tourism projects. The second pertains to the responsibility for the management and implementation of evaluation in rural tourism projects. Responsibility for these actions is seen to rest with the local authority. The final section relates to stakeholder participation in the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Chapter Nine presents the conclusions of the study in which key findings are highlighted and linked to the achievement of the research objectives. The chapter also reflects upon the limitations of this study and makes recommendations for further research pertinent to the potential application of evaluation in rural tourism projects.

CHAPTER TWO

RURAL TOURISM: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

Three themes are central to this chapter. Firstly, the role of the public sector as the facilitator of an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism is examined. Secondly, the impacts of tourism on the rural environment are explored at a macro level. The term environment, as used throughout this chapter, encompasses the socioeconomic, sociocultural and physical perspectives of the rural environment. Finally, at a micro level, discussion focuses on management issues that impact upon the commercial viability of rural tourism projects. The overriding purpose of the chapter is to identify and critically analyse those issues emanating from the literature that can be used for comparative purposes against the index of criteria, developed by respondents to this study, for the suggested evaluation of rural tourism projects. Linkages between the literature discussed in this chapter and the proposed index of criteria are elaborated on in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This chapter commences with a review of the underlying rationale for the promotion of rural tourism development.

Tourism As An Agent of Diversification in Rural Areas

The decline of economic activity has led to the adoption, in many Western nations, of tourism as an alternative strategy for the economic and social regeneration of rural areas (Bramwell, 1994a; Dernoï, 1991; Luloff et al, 1994; Pompl and Lavery, 1993). In Britain, the economic and employment benefits of tourism are especially important in regions such as Scotland, Wales, Devon and Cornwall (Jenkins, 1991). This is demonstrated by the fact that 50 percent (£1.25 billion) of the total accrued tourism revenue is spent in rural Wales (Wales Tourist Board, 2001). Similarly in England rural tourism contributes £14 billion annually to the economy and generates 380,000 jobs (The United Kingdom Parliament Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, 2003). The perceived benefits of tourism as a catalyst of rural economic development are also increasingly promoted in less-developed countries, such as South Africa.

In South Africa, a pressing challenge facing the democratic government was finding a vehicle through which to mitigate rampant unemployment and the ravages of historic under-development in the country's impoverished rural communities. The National Tourism White Paper argued that tourism would be the catalyst for the development of rural areas and listed the use of 'tourism to aid the development of rural communities' as a key economic objective (Government of South Africa, 1996:25). Although no separate statistics are available for rural tourism in South Africa, it is estimated that 1,148,000 people were employed in tourism related enterprises in 2002 (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2003).

Despite its perceived attractiveness as an agent of rural development academics sound a caveat that in areas characterised by agricultural or extractive resource dependencies, converting to a service-sector economy does not necessarily bring about economic well-being but potentially substitutes one economic dependency for another (Krannich and Luloff, 1991; Luloff et al, 1994). Rural tourism scholars (Butler and Clark, 1992; Luloff et al, 1994) emphasise that the economy of an area is best served where rural tourism is integrated into wider local development plans. The warning is also sounded that tourism is best promoted as a complement to an already thriving rural economy as opposed to one that is weak and in which 'tourism will create a highly unbalanced income and employment distribution' (Butler and Clark, 1992:175). Unforeseen contingencies, such as the 'foot-and-mouth' outbreak in Britain, highlight the economic vulnerability of tourism in rural areas to circumstances over which tourism operators have little or no control (Ireland and Vetier, 2002).

It is argued that the development and management of a rural tourism sector that optimises wider socio-economic benefits is also contingent on the formulation of appropriate tourism policies and plans and the development of effective institutional capacity for their implementation. Fulfilling its responsibilities in this domain presents significant challenges to the public sector in rural areas (Jenkins et al, 1998). Not least of these challenges is gaining political acceptance of rural tourism as worthy of government intervention, a factor that is crucial if the public sector is to shoulder its responsibility in creating an environment conducive to the development

of a rural tourism sector that maximises its benefits, simultaneously minimising its negative impacts.

Rural Tourism and the Public Sector

The complexities inherent in the term 'the public sector', which does not represent a homogenous category, are recognised. However, a working definition for the purpose of this thesis includes the departments of government with responsibility for tourism at national, regional and local level. It also embraces government agencies, including Tourism Boards and Environmental, Funding and Development Institutions (Cooper et al, 1998). Holder's (1992) metaphorical description of public and private sector roles in Caribbean tourism is equally valid in South Africa or Britain where governments acknowledge the private sector as the driver and the public sector as the facilitator of tourism (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999; Government of South Africa, 1996).

The private sector should see itself as providing the locomotive, and the government as laying the rails, on which the train proceeds. If the rails are correctly laid and the points well managed, the train will proceed at speed and in safety (Holder, 1992:159).

Notwithstanding the importance of the public sector as the architect of the 'rails' (Holder, 1992:159) there is scepticism with regard to its understanding of the type of policies and institutional arrangements most appropriate to rural tourism and thus to the proficiency with which its responsibilities are executed (Hall and Jenkins, 1998). Whilst the degree of government intervention in any industry is largely determined by current political philosophy, its intervention in rural tourism is generally based upon the sector's perceived contribution to the rural economy (Hall and Jenkins, 1998). Primary policy decisions include the nature of government involvement and the level at which this will occur (Inskeep, 1991; Jenkins, 1991). The many levels of government who have a vested interest in the development of rural tourism compound the complexities of policy and planning for the sector. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that different levels of government tend to have tourism objectives that bifurcate from those levels above or below them (McKercher, 1999; Williams and Shaw, 1991). In Britain, the scope for divergence is intensified by the fact that government interest extends beyond national boundaries to encompass those

of the broader European Union. In South Africa, limited demarcation of responsibilities between tiers of government has led to ubiquitous role incertitude and lack of direction (Briedenhann and Butts, 2003).

Conflicting intra-government interests and priorities can play havoc with the tourism policy agenda, particularly where control of tourism resources rests with more than one department (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). In a study of worldwide governmental activity Jefferies (2001:237) reports 'scant evidence of any high level enthusiasm for or sustained success in the pursuit of inter-ministerial coordination with the development of tourism as its specific objective'. This situation is evident in both Britain and South Africa. Elliott (1997) alleges that the British government ministerial coordination committee rarely convenes and that tourism officials only meet with other ministries in times of crisis. The Rural Affairs Forum for England Tourism Sub-Group (2002:3) states unequivocally 'one of the reasons for underachievement may be the fragmentation of responsibility for rural tourism within Government'. In South Africa, government acknowledges that allocating tourism and environmental responsibilities within one department does not guarantee cohesion or cooperation. 'These two may seem to be ideal partners, in reality environment and tourism exist under one roof, but do not work closely together' (Government of South Africa, 1996:11).

The diverse and fragmented nature of tourism as a sector, together with over-lapping functions in government departments, creates confusion as to where responsibility and control is vested. It is also argued that cooperation and coordination between departments becomes disorganized or non-existent (Inskeep, 1991; Lickorish, 1991) and that policies designed to monitor and control the negative impacts of tourism development are to a significant degree rendered ineffective (McKercher, 1993). Compounding the complexity is the proliferation of tourism agencies and organizations at international, national, regional and local level. Achieving synergy, role clarity and an acceptable distribution of resources between the various levels of such agencies represents a considerable challenge (Jefferies, 2001). These difficulties are amplified by the 'sections and cultures within agencies whose value sets, and therefore agendas and priorities, differ' (Hall and Jenkins, 1998:25). Whilst Britain is not immune to intra-agency conflict, the epic political transformation in South

Africa, where vestiges of previous political philosophies linger within some institutions, has intensified this phenomenon.

It is argued that local community control of rural tourism is crucial (Hall and Jenkins, 1998). Recognition of the validity of this argument means that it is at local government, the closest institution on the ground and putatively neutral and working for the benefit of the wider community, that sound management of rural tourism can generally best be implemented. Jefferies (2001) underpins this argument alleging that the greatest potential for achieving coherence and cooperation between the multifarious public and private sector bodies involved in tourism lies at local government level. Whilst others (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998) agree that local government are best placed to manage the intricacies of tourism, they also assert that the public sector lack of knowledge, understanding and commitment to the industry is most prevalent at this level. Respondent recognition of this constraint is further discussed in Chapters Five and Eight. Allegations of 'ignorance or wilful neglect' have, however, been extended to decision-makers at all levels of government whose unrealistic expectations of tourism's benefits, and proclivity to disregard the negative impacts that restrict those benefits, have dogged the formulation and implementation of rural tourism policy (Hall and Jenkins, 1998:24). In what follows some of the policy instruments available to government in the governance and management of rural tourism are examined.

Instruments of Rural Tourism Policy

Regulatory instruments are designed to manage the scope and scale of rural tourism in a manner that either limits negative impacts on the host environment or encourages specific types of rural tourism development. Regulatory instruments commonly encompass land-use controls, site planning and architectural guidelines, building and licensing regulations, the imposition of minimum facility and safety standards, labour directives and environmental regulation and assessments (Butler and Clark, 1992; Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Jenkins, 1991). Some regulatory instruments, for example onerous permit and licensing requirements, are frequently perceived by small tourism operators as a significant hindrance in terms both of time

and cost (McKercher and Robbins, 1998) and as a restriction to optimal business operation (Thomas et al, 1998).

Theoretically land-use policy is recognized as one of the most effective instruments available to government in controlling tourism development (Green, 1995; Hall and Jenkins, 1995). This is particularly important in the countryside where tourism should both enhance and help to conserve the rural environment (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The imposition of zoning policies, which should be based on an analysis of the best development option for the land in question (World Tourism Organisation, 1994), directly influences the supply of rural tourism. Tourism activities in rural areas are also heavily dependant on access to land and water owned or managed by a diversity of private and public landowners or agencies. Legislation, public policy and the interests, attitudes and values of the landholders or their managers govern the ease with which access to these critical resources is secured (Jenkins and Prin, 1998).

In Britain, policy that maintains rights of access to the countryside or influences private landowners to allow right-of-use to areas essential to rural tourism activities is perceived as crucial (Curry, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; The Rural Affairs Forum for England Tourism Sub-Group, 2002). In South Africa, the battle by indigenous people for the restitution of land forfeited during the previous dispensation is a highly sensitive issue and one that has significant potential impact on South Africa's rural tourism development. This situation underscores Fennell's (1999) argument that both tourism and conservation will only be readily acceptable to indigenous people if land issues are satisfactorily resolved.

The instruments of public sector policy are equally supportive as regulatory. For example, government may commit expenditure or enter into public-private partnerships to facilitate the development of infrastructure, such as roads and public transport, or utilities, for example, electricity or sewage systems, necessary for tourism development (Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Middleton and Hawkins, 1998). Assistance to rural tourism in the procurement of funding is pivotal (Getz and Page, 1997). Only government can allocate the incentives required to encourage investment and employment generation or provide the support required by emerging tourism

businesses (Hall and Jenkins, 1998). Public sector marketing support, which frequently takes the form of an umbrella campaign under which individual operators or private sector marketing organisations promote their tourism offerings, is equally important (Gilbert, 1989; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The public sector may also offer marketing subsidies or act in an advisory capacity to operators devising promotional material or marketing campaigns (Middleton 1988; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Supporting the rural tourism sector with the provision of information pertaining to market trends and visitor statistics is vital. 'The need for better information has been a consistent theme in rural tourism for years' (The Rural Affairs Forum for England Tourism Sub-Group, 2002:3).

There is evidence that institutions entrusted with the management of rural areas recognize the importance of public sector support. In Britain, a memorandum from the Countryside Agency to the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport (The United Kingdom Parliament Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, 2003:4) states 'government needs to ensure that structures, policy and funding are in place, which support both the tourism industry and its consumers'. Government functions highlighted in this memorandum include: 1) research, intelligence and monitoring functions; 2) policy development; 3) quality standards; 4) advice and dissemination of best practice to assist and inform regional strategies and activity; and 5) supportive national marketing initiatives. These functions are also identified as the role of the public sector in South Africa (Government of South Africa, 1996). The importance of the supportive role of the public sector is further highlighted in the research findings discussed in Chapter Five.

Public sector support and facilitation is equally crucial to tourism education and training (Lickorish, 1991; World Tourism Organisation, 1998) and actions designed to improve the quality and availability of training in the tourism and hospitality sectors are included in policy initiatives and tourism strategies in both Britain and South Africa (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999; Government of South Africa, 1996; Scottish Executive, 2000). Rural tourism operators and employees, however, experience difficulties in accessing training, a factor that has led Page and Getz (1997) to argue for more adaptable programmes, which take into account constraints of distance, time and finance. Echtner (1995) similarly argues that the

onus is on the public sector to facilitate access to training for tourism entrepreneurs by devolving programmes, appropriate to local needs, to a regional level.

The facilitation of tourism awareness programmes is also perceived as a government responsibility (Timothy, 2002). In both developed and less-developed countries it is acknowledged that awareness programmes are crucial in managing expectations, increasing community understanding of the potential rewards, opportunities and negative impacts that tourism will generate, and empowering local people to participate meaningfully in tourism planning (Din, 1996; Government of South Africa, 1996; The Countryside Agency, 2002). Assuming leadership in planning for the development and management of rural tourism is as important a public sector responsibility as is its role in governance and support of the sector.

Planning for Rural Tourism

Throughout the literature it is advocated that tourism planning should be coordinated and inclusive (Dowling, 1993; Inskeep, 1991) with different levels of planning accommodated and interlinked (Pearce, 1995). This includes planning at national, provincial, regional and local level and, in the case of Britain as a member of the European Union, at supra-national level (Hall, 2000). The blame for the lack of rigorous planning is often laid at the feet of government who, in the drive to promote the value of tourism as a means of economic diversification, are prone to prioritise economic goals and benefits with little consideration of the costs and negative impacts to the sociocultural or physical environment (Hall, 2000). If these weaknesses are to be overcome in planning for rural tourism, greater understanding of the sector at local and regional level, where its integration into the framework of mainstream regional and local development planning should eventuate, is vitally important (Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Telfer, 2002; World Tourism Organisation, 1994).

However, planning for rural tourism is multifaceted and complex. The planning environment is complicated by the fact that whilst the skeleton of rural tourism is comprised of independent operators, its backbone frequently comprises national parks or areas of countryside owned or managed by the public sector or non-governmental organizations. The vital role played by both the public and private

sectors in the supply of rural tourism thus substantiates the need for productive partnerships in ensuring successful planning and management of the sector (Curry, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). It is argued that the future of rural tourism is dependent not only upon its integration with other local economic sectors and development goals (Butler et al, 1998) but also upon the inclusion of the local community in determining the type and scale of rural tourism in a particular local area to ensure its compatibility with local needs and acceptability to local residents (Butler and Clark, 1992; Hall and Jenkins, 1998). Centring control of rural tourism at local level is thus imperative to ensure that it is the people on the ground, who ultimately determine the success or failure of tourism plans and strategies, that decide their outcome (Butler and Clark, 1992; Long, 1993; Luloff et al, 1994).

Timothy and Tosun (2003:181) argue that 'equity, efficiency, integration, balance, harmony, and ecological and cultural integrity' are more easily entrenched when communities affected by the impacts of tourism participate in its planning and development. Understanding who, or what, constitutes the "community" that should participate in rural tourism planning is complex. Communities have variously been identified in terms of geographic location, social and cultural affiliation or ideology (Richards and Hall, 2000). It is also argued that a community may extend beyond geographic boundaries to include people bound by a mutual interest (Joppe, 1996). Wilkinson (1991) argues that it is the people who through everyday interaction profess an interest in the local area that comprise the place-based community. The most pragmatic and inclusive definition is, however, that of Bosselman et al (1999) who include both public and private sector individuals and bodies that will be impacted by tourism development within the destination area. Bosselman et al's (1999) definition is perceived as appropriate in view of its recognition that it is those members of a local area who will enjoy the benefits or suffer the consequences of tourism who should be given voice in its policy, planning and decision-making. This definition is also perceived as complementary to that of Patton (1997) who, in identifying potential participants in the evaluation process proposed by this study, posits that it is those people with commitment to, and interest in, the utilization of evaluation findings, who are legitimate stakeholders. The issue of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process is more extensively discussed in Chapter Three.

Notwithstanding its appositeness, the inclusion of all Bosselman et al's (1999) identified stakeholders would render the planning process unworkable. Ensuring balanced stakeholder representation is nonetheless perceived as fundamental to successful participatory planning (Bramwell and Sharman, 2000; Long and Nuckolls, 1994) a factor complicated by the economic and social heterogeneity of rural tourism stakeholders (Bramwell and Sharman, 2000). The complexities are accentuated by the lack of understanding between tourism and local community interests. For example, in Britain's Hope Valley it was perceived that the majority of the community did not benefit from tourism. Conversely those directly involved in tourism were perceived to 'reap handsome benefits largely at the expense of the rest of the community' (Peak Tourism Partnership, 1994b:11). The Countryside Agency (2002) also alleges that whilst the economic benefits of tourism are easily identified and appreciated by rural communities, other less recognisable benefits, such as the retention of local services, are not well understood.

It is recognised that educating stakeholders to participate in the planning process is important (Long and Nuckolls, 1994). This is significant in view of Gray's (1985) argument, articulated in Chapter One, that capacity to participate is integral to perceived participation legitimacy. Whilst Gray's introduction of capacity as a requirement to legitimise participation is equally relevant in Britain, this is particularly problematic in South Africa, where few members of rural communities have either the understanding or access to the information that would capacitate them to participate meaningfully in tourism planning. Participatory planning thus becomes a slow and ongoing process in which people need time to absorb and unravel foreign concepts such as travel for leisure purposes (Fowkes and Jonsson, 1994). However, as Timothy and Tosun (2003) emphasise, lack of understanding or experience of tourism does not negate the important knowledge owned by communities in relation to local sociocultural or environmental norms and conditions. In any event even in a developed country, such as Britain, the quantity and scope of information and the range of discussion in planning and dialogue can be confusing to participants engaged in planning processes (Jamal and Getz, 2000).

It is alleged that the advocacy of community involvement in tourism planning fails to consider either the influence of local power relations, the institutional obstructions or the changes in attitude necessary to actualise such involvement (Reed, 1997; Tosun, 2000). It is further argued that the belief that collaborative processes can overcome imbalances of power is a fallacy and that even in developed countries it is the business elite that drives development decisions (Reed, 1997). There is also validity in Reed's (1997) contention that local government is not a neutral roleplayer since its reliance on business to generate employment and tax revenue makes it a collaborator and lobbyist on behalf of developers. In less-developed countries power is commonly vested not only with the political and economic elite but also with traditional power structures, which customarily take decisions on behalf of their communities (Timothy, 2002). These difficulties, inherent in community tourism planning, are frequently exacerbated by the lack of capacity prevalent amongst public sector tourism officials who are said to have minimal understanding of the importance of community participation in the planning process (Timothy, 2002; Tosun, 2000).

Of the various tourism-planning models expounded in the literature (for example Hall, 2000; Jamal and Getz, 1995), the PIC (participatory, incremental, collaborative/cooperative) approach is perceived by this thesis as appropriate to rural tourism (See Timothy and Tosun, 2003). A commonly used analogy in Africa is that of the three-legged African cooking pot. Lauded for its strength and ability to spread heat equally on an open fire, the pot is dependent for its stability upon its three legs. An imbalance in the length of these legs limits both the functionality and utility of the pot thus demonstrably minimising its benefits. The PIC planning model is equally dependent upon the balance of the three 'legs' of participation, cooperation and incremental development. Participation includes stakeholder involvement in decision-making; consideration of residents needs and wishes for tourism; creating economic opportunities for local people and educating them to participate in and understand tourism (Timothy and Tosun, 2003). Cooperation/collaboration encompasses government agencies; the private and public sectors; different administrative levels and same level polities. Incremental development includes informed decision-making in considering options for tourism; allowing for gradual implementation; and regular, continuous monitoring and evaluation to ascertain whether objectives are being realised or where aberrations are occurring (Timothy

and Tosun, 2003). Believing that these principles will be easily operationalized is idealistic in view of the fact that both the public and private sectors are primarily driven by the promise of economic benefits. This thesis agrees that evaluation is an essential element of the tourism planning and development process. As suggested in Chapter One it recommends that the implementation of evaluation should eventuate at project level, a practice that would provide decision-makers with a tool through which to identify project adherence to rural tourism plans and objectives and, where relevant, their deviance. It would also facilitate the timeous detection and allow for proactive management of the impacts of rural tourism on the host environment. In what follows the 'macro impacts' of tourism on this environment are examined with a view to exposing issues against which the index of criteria, developed by respondents to this research for the evaluation of rural tourism projects, can be compared.

The Impacts of Tourism on the Rural Environment

Whilst there is a debate on how to conceptualise and measure the impacts of tourism, Mathieson and Wall (1982) compartmentalise these impacts as 'economic', 'social' and 'environmental' but point out that this is to some extent misleading since many impacts overlap categories. For example, the number of jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities created by rural tourism will generate both economic and social impacts on the host environment. As discussed in Chapter One, rural tourism 'in its purest form' (Lane, 1994a:14) is commonly envisaged as comprising small-scale, locally owned and controlled tourism projects (Lane, 1994a; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1994; Page and Getz, 1997). It is asserted that such small-scale developments are more easily integrated into and confer greater direct economic benefits on local communities (Smith, 1998; Timothy, 2002) and that they are less stressful to the cultural and natural environment (Long and Wall, 1995). These claims are, however, somewhat naive. As McKercher (1999:426) points out, most independent tourism operators will do 'first what is in their own best interests and secondly what is in the best interests of the community in which they exist'. It is similarly alleged that the tourism sector is awash with small operators, each of whom has some impact on the common resources on which they are reliant, but who individually neither take responsibility for these impacts nor contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the resource base (Middleton and Hawkins,

1998). Although Ioannides (2003:50) argues that operators of individual establishments should be concerned about the cumulative effects of their projects 'unfortunately, however, it is precisely the tourism entrepreneurs inability or unwillingness to comprehend the collective results of their individual actions that limits any genuine efforts to adopt balanced growth strategies'. It is in view of these arguments that this thesis suggests that the evaluation of rural tourism should be implemented at the individual project level thus allowing for a composite picture of the effects of rural tourism to be built at the local destination level where the 'cumulative long-term impacts (of rural tourism) might be almost invisible and difficult to monitor' (Page and Getz, 1997:22). A more in-depth examination of the relationship between tourism and the rural environment commences with an analysis of tourism's potential sociocultural impacts.

Tourism Impacts on the Sociocultural Environment of Rural Areas

The Countryside Agency (2000) alleges that in England and Wales high levels of unemployment and poor education have led to large-scale poverty in rural communities. They also assert that facilities and services in rural areas are declining. For example, 75 percent of rural parishes have no daily bus service and 49 percent no school (The Countryside Agency, 2000). In South Africa the situation is critical. Unemployment amongst rural communities bordering the country's premier national park runs at 40% (Honey, 1999), a statistic representative of many rural areas. Education provision is generally poor, a factor exacerbated by lack of infrastructure, particularly adequate transportation. Whilst the scale of rural deprivation differs between South Africa and Britain, the problems facing rural communities are similar - unemployment, low levels of education and skills and little economic opportunity. Small wonder that the potential of tourism, frequently perceived 'to present an easy path to economic development' in rural areas (Hall and Jenkins, 1998:38), has been both welcomed and exaggerated. At the same time the potentially negative impacts of tourism on the sociocultural environment commonly receive less emphasis, despite Craik's (1991) caveat that it is the social and cultural effects of tourism that directly impact the lives of local communities.

Craik (1995:93) argues that to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of tourism to the host community 'social and cultural issues must be defined as part of

the tourist resource and incorporated in the planning, development and management processes of tourism'. Tourism cannot take place in isolation from the host community. Interaction between local residents and tourists occurs with residents, their culture and resources becoming part of the tourist product (Luloff et al, 1994; McKercher, 1993). In Britain, rural communities are often typecast as traditional and uncomplicated, with man and nature living and working harmoniously side-by-side (Butler et al, 1998). In South Africa the stereotypical rural image is of wild animals or indigenae arrayed in skins and spears. Neither representation is factual, nor are the lack of homogeneity, complexity and problems that besiege rural communities taken into account. Whilst it can be argued that all social relationships between tourists and their host communities are complex (McKercher, 1993), the manner in which rural communities are represented has the potential to further complicate host-guest perceptions and their subsequent encounters. Participation by rural communities in decisions relating not only to the scope and scale of tourism development in their area but also the way in which it is represented and interpreted is thus essential (Lankford et al, 1996; Laws, 1995). Adoption of a 'societal marketing approach', in which the social acceptability of the promotional material and message is screened by members of the affected community and other stakeholders, is recommended (Moscardo and Pearce, 2003:267).

Sociocultural impacts precipitated by host-guest encounters can be both positive and negative. In the positive domain rural tourism that provides opportunities for constructive interaction between hosts and visitors can engender respect, understanding and an appreciation of different lifestyles, beliefs and customs thus bridging the cultural gap. For example, homestays in South Africa's townships have potential as a conduit in helping people overcome their prejudices as positive interaction between hosts and guests brings new understanding and helps to bridge the racial divide (Tavner, 2003). It has particularly been noted that women, commonly the dominant figures in rural homestays and agro- and farm tourism projects, profess enjoyment in meeting and relating to interesting people from different cultural environments (Frater, 1983; Garcia-Roman et al, 1995; Ireland, 1993). Evidence also suggests that social contacts and personal interaction with visitors are a motivating factor in hosts' decision to embark on farm tourism (Oppermann, 1996; Pearce, 1990; Weaver and Fennell, 1997), although Pevetz

(1991) highlights that excessive stress on farmers' wives can lead to deterioration in the quality of family life.

Other perceived social impacts resulting from the host-guest encounter may include crime, prostitution and the 'demonstration effect' in which it is argued that the values, behaviour and attitudes of the host community change as a result of observing tourists. Links between tourism and crime are difficult to establish (Cooper et al, 1998). A review of tourism and crime research undertaken over a period of 25 years nonetheless comes to the conclusion that tourism does contribute to an increase in crime (Brunt and Hambly, 1999). However, as comparison of various studies (for example Jones and Mawby, 2002; Lankford, 1994) indicates, residents' perceptions of the extent to which crime is influenced by tourism vary from community to community. In South Africa, the high incidence of poverty provides fertile breeding ground for crime against tourists, a factor that would be discouraged by the more equitable spread of tourism benefits amongst South Africa's population (George, 2003).

The influence of the 'demonstration effect' as a catalyst of social change has been well documented. For example, in the Southern African context Harrison (1992c) describes how the adoption of jeans by young Swazi women is perceived as an affront to traditional culture. These influences, to which the youth in less-developed countries are perceived as particularly vulnerable, also have economic repercussions as the increasing demand for imported items, in preference to local products, offsets the benefits of tourist expenditure (Mihalić, 2002). However, as Fagence (2003:74) points out, even in developed countries amongst vulnerable groups 'the influence of the demonstration effect is inevitable, but its local significance will be determined largely by the strength of the philosophy and code which binds the community'. In Cornwall, there is evidence that conflict between cultural identity and tourism is prevalent in some British communities. Residents, who regard 'Cornishness' as meaningful in their daily lives, perceive tourism as an erosion of Cornish identity, making them intolerant both of tourists and tourist businesses operated by non-Cornish people (Ireland, 1999:215). In a previous study Payton (1992:170), while recognizing the economic value of tourism, nonetheless cautioned 'if this panacea is to continue to bear fruit then it has to be acknowledged that Cornishness, which gives

the county its separate cultural and product identity, is a finite resource'. In South Africa the majority of the indigenous population has over time adopted western norms, religions, dress and language. However, since the advent of the country's democracy, there has been growing recognition that African culture and history are valid and sought after components of South African tourism offerings, a factor that is regenerating both traditional customs and community pride.

Rural tourism offers abundant opportunity for the development of small-scale cultural tourism projects which benefit communities through their ability to use, nurture and enhance the traditional skills, artistic expression and craft production of local people (Ashley et al, 2001). The relationship between craft production and rural tourism is, however, also one of contradiction. For example, in Cyprus the development of agrotourism has reputedly led to the revitalisation of local crafts, such as lace and wine making, and to have renewed villagers' awareness of their cultural heritage (Sharpley, 2002). Conversely, in rural Pennsylvania, demand for Amish quilts has led to the replacement of creativity by replication, mass production and even the importation of 'fake' items to meet tourist needs (Fagence, 2003).

Where traditional ceremonies or dances are replicated for tourists similar conflicts arise. On the one hand there is the imperative of 'deliverable' products (Getz and Page, 1997:200) that are compatible with tour operator schedules, offer reliable, regular show times and a guaranteed experience (McKercher, 1993). On the other, this is problematic to indigenous communities, such as those in rural South Africa, whose emphasis on time differs radically from that of their visitors. The role of indigenous people as performers for tourists is also conflictual and contradictory. For example, Hitchcock (1997:98) records the antipathy of Botswana bushmen 'we do not want to have to perform for tourists. It is not right that we should be treated like animals in a circus'. Conversely there is evidence that where traditional customs or enactments of history have fallen into disuse tourism may become the vehicle through which community pride and identity is revitalised. A study amongst Louisiana's Cajun people revealed that in presenting their culture to outsiders Cajun's themselves became students of their culture leading to a revival of dying customs, a renewed sense of identity and an enhanced sense of ethnic pride (Esman, 1984). In Britain and America the benefits of small town events and countryside festivals are

perceived to extend beyond economic gain from tourism to include the strengthening of community spirit and enrichment of the quality of small-town life (Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Janiske and Drews, 1998). It is not inconceivable that tourism in rural areas of South Africa can fulfil a role in regenerating and celebrating cultural customs, events and festivals, discouraged under the previous regime.

It is not only through host-guest encounters that tourism generates sociocultural impacts on rural communities. Infrastructure development for tourist benefit, pressure on local resources, and the conflicts that arise from resource usage, all generate social impacts that may lead to negative attitudes towards tourists and tourism in general. Doxey's (1975) Index of Tourist Irritation posits that host community attitudes to tourism deteriorate over time from initial euphoria to apathy, irritation and eventually hostility as the negative impacts of tourism become more apparent. A major weakness of Doxey's model is, however, its failure to recognise either that host communities are not homogenous (Brunt and Courtney, 1999) or that resident perceptions tend to fluidity dependent upon their experiences with tourism and tourists (Boyd and Singh, 2003). Over two decades countless studies have been conducted in rural communities to ascertain resident attitudes to tourism and its impacts (For example Allen et al, 1993; Johnson et al, 1994; King et al, 1993; Lankford, 1994; Long et al, 1990; McCool and Martin, 1994; Perdue et al, 1990). This thesis argues that the only conclusion to be drawn from these studies, which have somewhat contradictory findings, is that attitudes within one community cannot be generalized to another. All rural tourism development takes place within its own particular context and the attitudes of communities, the type of tourism development they favour, and the level of the perceived negative impacts they suffer, will vary both within and between communities. These factors emphasise the importance of communication, consultation and consideration of attitudes on an individual community basis (Andereck and Vogt, 2000).

McKercher (1993) argues that tourism is a fiercely competitive consumer of resources, sharing and competing for the use of facilities, outdoor recreation opportunities and space with local residents. Studies in both England and Wales (Prentice and Hudson, 1993; The Countryside Agency, 2002; The Rural Development Commission, 1996) found that traffic congestion, litter, pollution,

overcrowding, strain on public facilities, environmental degradation and rising house prices were perceived as the major problems attributed to tourism. On the other hand tourism's ability to catalyse the development or upgrading of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities that cater to both community and tourists is also acknowledged (Perdue et al, 1990; Sheldon and Var, 1984; Snepenger and Johnson, 1991; The Rural Development Commission, 1995). In Britain, it is, however, perceived that whilst the direct economic benefits of rural tourism, such as job creation or entrepreneurial stimulation, are easily recognised, its role in sustaining local services is seldom credited since the indirect effects of rural tourism spend are neither understood, nor easily quantified (The Countryside Agency, 1999; The Rural Development Commission, 1996).

Numerous researchers (Butler et al, 1998; McKercher, 1993; Page and Getz, 1997; Roberts and Hall, 2001) point out that uncontrolled rural tourism leads to increasing conflict between different types of tourists, between tourism operators and other residents, and between tourists and the local community, as they compete for use of the same resource base. In developed countries this conflict extends to issues such as the use of hunting or fishing grounds for recreational purposes (Martin and McCool cited in Smith and Krannich, 1998). The situation is, however, exacerbated in less-developed areas where indigenous rural communities are frequently dependent on natural resources for survival (Ashley, 2000; Hitchcock, 1997). The extent and intensity of resident perceptions of rural tourism impacts is thus variable and each local area must effectively plan, manage, monitor and evaluate its development accordingly.

It is argued that to ensure maximum community beneficiation control of tourism resources should not be granted to outsiders and tourism projects embarked upon should be acceptable to and supported by the local people who suffer the emergent negative impacts (Oliver-Smith et al, 1989). It is, however, also argued that retention of tourism control within a community is no guarantee of equitable involvement in, or beneficiation from, tourism. Butler (1980) suggests that in the early stages of tourism development local people may become involved in small projects that offer services to a limited number of tourists. Proactive entrepreneurs that grasp opportunities and in so doing accumulate a measure of wealth and status may,

however, become the catalyst of disputes, power struggles and jealousy putting unbearable strain on community relationships and structure (Butler, 1980). The employment benefits derived from tourism are equally divisive since employee recruitment in entrepreneurial ventures invariably occurs within the same social network alienating other sectors of the community (Knight, 1996).

A further problematic factor is that, in the rural tourism context, entrepreneurs often lack the capital, expertise and management skills with which to expand their tourism infrastructure (Allen et al, 1993; Place, 1991). The tendency to exogenous control of rural tourism is not limited to less-developed countries. In America's Silver Valley, Allen et al (1993) found that four years after the initial advent of tourism, most ancillary businesses, such as food and motels, were owned and managed by non-residents or newcomers to the Valley. Furthermore, in South Africa, government actively encourages outside/foreign investment as a means of stimulating the development of tourism in rural areas (Government of South Africa, 1996). In the European Union, both national and supranational policies equally encourage investment that will attract both employment and residents to declining rural areas (Roberts and Hall, 2001).

It is also argued that the external influence wrought by exogenous development should be viewed as an opportunity to stimulate diversity and innovation rather than as a threat (Jenkins et al, 1998). As Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer (1994) point out, a lack of both entrepreneurs and funds may compel rural areas to seek exogenous investors who may also be the key to raising the standard of local tourism attractions, activities and services. What is fundamental is the extent to which rural tourism benefits local people by virtue of employment, ancillary entrepreneurial opportunity and the support of local products and services. It is also imperative that local communities are involved in the policy-making, planning and management of tourism in their areas. However, transparency (Craik, 1995), clarity of purpose (Crouch, 1994) and opportunity for open communication and consultation (Jamal and Getz, 2000) is essential lest such involvement is perceived as mere tokenism. Butler (1999:67) emphasises that if the benefits of tourism are to be maximised and its negative impacts limited and controlled, tourism should be integrated and moulded to fit the sociocultural and physical environment 'such that the end result is an

acceptable and functionally successful community, in both ecological and human terms'. In what follows the ecological impacts of rural tourism are examined.

Tourism Impacts on the Physical Environment of Rural Areas

Over the past decades numerous researchers (Cater and Lowman, 1994; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Hunter and Green, 1995; Mathieson and Wall, 1982) have documented concerns pertaining to the relationship between tourism and the physical environment. 'The dependence of tourism on the quality of the environment places it in a very special position in the whole debate about sustainable tourism' (Denman, 1992:3). Despite this dependence the tourism industry is frequently condemned as a consumer of energy, originator of waste and perpetrator of the degradation of environmentally sensitive areas (Eadington and Smith, 1992; Hunter and Green, 1995; McKercher, 1993). These concerns are particularly significant in rural tourism where a high quality, unpolluted environment forms the platform on which a substantial percentage of rural tourism projects are based.

Throughout rural areas the supply of infrastructure that impacts on the natural environment presents a conundrum. On the one hand Page and Getz (1997) argue that rural tourism planners commonly fail to perceive that increased infrastructure and development can destroy the ethos of rural areas and thus adopt a market driven approach, rather than one of conservation, in planning for new infrastructure. On the other hand Hall (2000) makes the valid assertion that local residents may welcome the development of tourism as a means of securing an improvement in infrastructure for their own use. The imperative is a focus on infrastructure provision that both benefits local residents and minimizes negative impacts on the physical environment.

In popular rural tourism areas in Britain, residents commonly complain of the pollutive impacts of traffic (The Countryside Agency, 2002; The Rural Development Commission, 1996). Most rural tourists travel by private motorcar, a factor that portends negative impacts from visual and air pollution in the form of car parks, gas emissions and traffic congestion (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Tribe et al, 2000). It is argued that it is not only the environmental impacts of traffic within the destination but also the effects of tourist transit to and from the area that warrant consideration

(Goodall and Stabler, 2000). The development of user-friendly, cheap, efficient, safe public transport would thus hold significant advantages in facilitating access to, and overcoming the problems of private vehicle usage within, rural areas and in serving the needs of the local community (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; World Tourism Organisation, 1994). Well signposted routes, the restriction of traffic and the provision of alternative transport are all perceived as potential strategies in ameliorating traffic impacts in rural areas (Bramwell, 1991). The provision of other forms of environmentally friendly transport, such as cycling, may in itself offer entrepreneurial opportunity (Glyptis, 1991). Providing alternative means of transportation is one thing, persuading tourists to use it is another. Notwithstanding the provision of intra area transport, 80 percent of the tourists who arrive in the Trossachs in private vehicles continue to use them throughout their stay in the area. Caffyn (2000:96) alleges that despite the fact that the main attraction of the area is its natural environment, only a small minority of tourists 'consciously views their visit in environmental terms'.

Bramwell's (1991) envisaged restriction of traffic in popular rural areas is contentious. On the one hand it is argued that the imposition of restrictions is ineffective and irksome to tourists. On the other hand it is argued that restrictions on private vehicle access within conserved areas assists in maintaining environmental quality (Stadel, 1996). This is particularly relevant where the 'combination of accessibility and attractiveness lies at the root of the problems that the area experiences' (Peak Tourism Partnership, 1994b:3). The overcrowding experienced on the Norfolk Broads and in the Hope Valley are cases in point. On the Norfolk Broads the imposition of access fees has been opposed on the grounds that admission should be available to everybody. In the meantime overcrowding is degrading the natural environment and destroying the ambience that attracts visitors to the area (Brouwer et al, 2001). Despite resident concerns about overcrowding in the Hope Valley, a suggestion to impose parking charges in an attempt to limit traffic congestion provoked anger. 'Once the traders suddenly felt that (it)...was going to restrict the number of visitors they were absolutely aghast and up-in-arms' (Bramwell and Sharman, 2000:31). Creating a balance between commercial projects, to which profitability is a priority, the needs and concerns of local residents, and the

natural environment, presents a formidable management problem in popular rural areas.

It is alleged that there is evidence that tourists are becoming more environmentally conscious (Bramwell, 1994; Wright, 1994). For example, 64 percent of tourists surveyed in Britain acknowledged that tourism caused some environmental damage and professed a willingness to spend more on attractions, activities and services that are environmentally sensitive (Diamantis, 1999). This contention is disputed as other researchers (Becker, 1995; Wheeler, 1994) argue that few tourists are changing their behaviour to reflect enhanced consciousness. Swarbrooke (1999:26) similarly alleges that amongst British tourists those demonstrating considerably adaptive behaviour represent only 'a small niche' and that even the purportedly 'green' German tourist market is more concerned with the natural environment as 'a key determinant of the quality of their holiday experience, than their concern with the environmental impacts of tourism in general'. Roberts and Hall (2001:142) thus conclude that 'the assumption that the rural tourist has an interest in the environment is a naïve one'.

It is further posited that commercial involvement in rural tourism acts as a catalyst for greater protection of the landscape and its wildlife in order to retain its attraction to visitors (The Countryside Agency, 2003). There are also arguments portending that avoiding environmental degradation, reducing waste and conserving water and energy is a matter of economic necessity to many rural tourism projects (Page and Getz, 1997). Studies in this regard have produced conflicting results. For example, in Australia, Carlsen et al (2001) found that 40 percent of family-owned businesses surveyed in the rural tourism and hospitality sector used alternative energy sources, 79 percent conserved water and 51 percent actively created environmental awareness amongst their guests. Conversely in East Sussex in Britain, tourism operators surveyed believed that 'small' and 'sustainable' were synonymous and thus did not acknowledge any impact on the host environment, contradicting the contention that small tourism businesses are more environmentally conscious (Berry and Ladkin, 1997). Similarly, in Portugal, Kappert (2000:262) claims that 'while lip service is paid to the concept of eco-tourism, in practice ecologically aware behaviour and activities are not in evidence'. It is alleged that tourism operators can gain competitive advantage by demonstrating environmental responsibility (Goodall and

Stabler, 2000; Tribe et al, 2000). Caffyn (2000:95), however, argues that with few exceptions 'businesses do not perceive the benefits either to their overheads or for marketing purposes'. Sceptics in any event aver that the attempt to appear environmentally conscious is frequently no more than a smokescreen (Sneddon, 2000) and that tourism operators, driven by profit motives, do not take a long-term view and afford little concern to intergenerational environmental sustainability (McKercher, 1993).

Coccossis (1996) posits that the capacity to manage environmental impacts should be built at local authority level. Goodall and Stabler (2000), however, contend that at individual project level, where uncertainty predominates as to how environmental standards should be set and measured, practical advice is needed to introduce sound environmental practices. They further allege that it is the actions undertaken by these individual tourism projects that 'in aggregate, generate the improvements in environmental performance which result in destination Environmental Quality Standards being achieved' (Goodall and Stabler, 2000:74). Although Pigram (1996) advocates the adoption of integrated environmental management he admits that the variance in size and the number of small, independent tourism operations make the adoption of a universal system impracticable and asserts that managers must choose environmental management practices best suited to their operation. Tribe et al (2000) have carried the concept of integrated environmental management to its logical conclusion, operationalizing theory and developing an environmental management system aimed at integrating environmental issues into all aspects of operation at the rural tourism project level.

It is argued that governments, becoming more aware of the irrevocable connection between tourism and the physical environment, are realising that maintenance, or improvement, of environmental quality is of substantial consequence (Inskeep, 1987; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Furthermore, it is envisaged that local authorities must assume responsibility in deciding whether new tourism projects are appropriate to the area considering their potential impacts on transport, waste disposal, noise and other environmental issues such as facility design (Green, 1995). It has also been suggested (Cronin, 1990) that approval of all tourism projects should be subject to a pre-implementation Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The proclivity to

focus on the physical impacts of tourism to the neglect of its sociocultural effects has, however, been identified as a fundamental flaw of EIAs (Green and Hunter, 1992; Simpson and Wall, 1999). It is further argued that whilst large tourism projects are generally subjected to an EIA, 'the cumulative impacts of many small developments may be just as troublesome...' (Simpson and Wall, 1999:236). What is significant is that these researchers (Goodall and Stabler, 2000; Pigram, 1996; Simpson and Wall, 1999; Tribe et al, 2000) place the focus for environmental assessment and improvement at the individual project level. This is congruent with the argument of this study that it is at this level that tourism impacts originate and that rural tourism should be evaluated. The final analysis of rural tourism impacts pertains to the socioeconomic environment.

Tourism Impacts on the Socioeconomic Environment of Rural Areas

Rural tourism is increasingly conceived and utilized as an instrument of socioeconomic development (Butler and Clark, 1992; Gannon, 1994; Greffe, 1994; Luloff et al, 1994; Shaw and Williams, 1994). However, as pointed out in Chapter One, expectations of the sector have tended to be overly optimistic. Researchers caution that tourism is not the universal panacea for the economic ills of rural areas. 1) Expectations of tourism's contribution to the rural economy are frequently inflated and competition with other domestic industries and occupations may have an overall negative effect (Saeter, 1998); 2) high numbers of rural tourists do not necessarily generate correspondingly high levels of per capita spending (Jenkins et al, 1998); 3) despite providing a supplementary income to rural communities, rural tourism might not generate high levels of income (Sharpley, 2002); and 4) the benefits of income and employment generated are diluted by leakages and poorly paid jobs (Ioannides, 2003). These contentions underpin the argument that tourism should not be relied on as the economic saviour of rural areas but should form part of a wider economic diversification strategy (Gannon, 1994) through which rural tourism may fulfil its promise in providing an additional income stream to rural communities and become a vehicle for the development and support of other rural economic sectors (Long and Edgell, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Whilst it is difficult to dispute the logic of diversification the reality, in areas marginalized by poverty and lack of opportunity, is that rural tourism is frequently perceived as the only economic option. Such is the situation in many of South Africa's rural areas.

In Britain, government agencies (The Countryside Agency, 2003; The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002) promote tourism as an opportunity for diversification from agriculture. England alone has 20,000 – 30,000 farms with some diversification into tourism (Busby and Rendle, 2000). There are no figures available for South Africa where only game-farm tourism has to date played a significant role. However, whilst tourism provides a valuable source of supplementary farm income, profitability is reputedly low (Oppermann, 1996). Furthermore, there is evidence that the net impact of tourism on agriculture can be negative as a result of escalating land prices and the alienation of farm labour to tourism (Kappert, 2000).

Fawcett (1996) argues that the economic stability of farm tourism, and its value in supplementing a declining agricultural economy, is largely dependent upon understanding the needs of a market that lacks homogeneity. Fawcett (1996) highlights the role of local government in researching and providing market-related intelligence, thus underpinning information provision as a public sector responsibility. He further cautions that few controls for entry into the sector, and the relatively low capital investment required, mean that farm tourism frequently does not offer a quality product which in turn impacts upon its profitability. It is also posited that farmers, who have little understanding of either tourists or of product quality or service, have found difficulty in reconciling agricultural values with the guest-service relationship and that diversification into farm tourism has been problematic (Fleischer and Pizam, 1997; Hjalager, 1996). Training in service and quality standards would thus appear to be critical if farm tourism is to fulfil its purpose as a commercially viable product.

Despite its perceived potential, Ireland and Vetier (2002) suggest that it was not until the devastating foot and mouth crisis that Britain fully understood the multi-faceted relationship between agriculture and tourism. Firstly, there is opportunity for direct investment in rural tourism projects, such as accommodation facilities or tourism activities, providing a supplementary income to the landholder and stimulating further spending in the local economy (The Countryside Agency, 2003). Secondly, there is opportunity for indirect involvement in tourism through the promotion and

provision of local produce, not only through linkages with other tourism providers but also directly to tourists through farm stalls, local markets, retailers and visits to production facilities such as cheese, cider or wine farms or craft workshops (Kappert, 2000; Pearce, 1990; Pevetz, 1991; The Countryside Agency, 2003). Comparative studies with other European countries, however, provide evidence in these countries of 1) greater experience in promoting local foods to tourists; 2) more creative product development and marketing; 3) less reliance on accommodation and more on other tourism activities; 4) experience in developing local partnerships and networks; and 5) greater application of accreditation and branding schemes (The Countryside Agency, 2003:4). Closing these gaps will be necessary if rural tourism is to optimise its potential beneficiation of agriculture.

The economic benefit derived from tourism is mediated by several important factors amongst which are the diversity, uniqueness and added-value offered by an eclectic mosaic of rural tourism attractions, activities and services in a local area. Greffe (1994:30) suggests that this potential for diversity presents unique opportunity to manage in terms of 'economies of scope' as opposed to those of 'scale', which emphasise increased tourist numbers. In other words the range of rural tourism attractions and activities in an area should add diversity and value to the tourist experience thereby satisfying visitors and serving as an incentive to longer stays, increased spend and repeat visits. The exigency is a focus on originality with, for example, accommodation facilities reflecting the traditional building styles and character of the area and restaurants specialising in traditional cuisine with the spotlight on locally produced wines and food (Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer, 1994). The importance both of integration with local culture and of linkage with local producers is thus emphasised as a means of maximising economic benefits. That issues of scale cannot, however, be discounted is highlighted by Van der Straaten (2000:230) who points out that 'scale is an important factor. Costs have to be covered by a certain number of tourists'.

Commercially successful rural tourism projects are largely dependent upon satisfying consumer needs. Confusion exists regarding the profile of the rural tourist. On the one hand it is argued that the trend to greater flexibility, environmental sensitivity and desire for interaction with traditional cultures, together with higher education

levels and increased leisure time, has accentuated the propensity for more affluent tourists to evince interest in rural tourism (Brunt, 2001; Greffe, 1994; Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer, 1994; The Countryside Commission, 1992). On the other hand it is alleged that there is little evidence to support this contention and that the appeal for rural tourism, based on variables such as cost, uniqueness of experience or the opportunity for adventure, is broad (Page and Getz, 1997). Furthermore, in most countries the greatest demand for rural tourism emanates from domestic tourists, many of who are low-income earners (Grolleau, 1987).

This study agrees with an emphasis on quality and diversity as opposed to scale, an approach apposite to Wheeller's (1994) assertion that 'sustainability' can only be achieved by curtailing tourist numbers. It is, however, idealistic to believe that individual operators, who are generally numbers driven, will easily adopt this philosophy. Greffe's (1994) proposal calls for the establishment of networks of rural tourism providers, organized to maximise opportunity, offer a wide range of activities and encourage additional tourist spend. Rubies (2001) similarly alleges that the experiences sought by tourists are delivered in small geographical clusters that compete with other clusters for tourist custom and that strengthening the links between value chains (all suppliers, both public and private sector, of the composite tourist experience) helps an area to attain competitive advantage. Collaboration and networking is, however, rare (Saxena, 2000). It is thus contingent upon rural tourism operators to recognize that adopting a spirit of cooperation, as opposed to competition, at the local level will facilitate a flow of tourists between attractions and activities, offer a diverse and exciting experience and add to the attractiveness of the area as a rural tourism destination (Roberts and Hall, 2001).

Properties of scope can also be achieved by the development of tourism routes. Diverse projects located along routes attract visitors, augment the tourist experience and 'become a rallying point for long-term development and management' (Long and Edgell, 1997:74). Tourism routes are additionally effective tools in redistributing economic benefits by encouraging tourists to move away from major attractions and enjoy experiences offered by surrounding regions (Queensland Heritage Trails Network, 2000). Moreover, the management of carrying capacity, with concomitant reduction of environmental impacts that may be caused by clustering, is facilitated as

tourists move along the route (Hill and Gibbons, 1994). Routes are also an important catalyst of entrepreneurial activity and employment creation stimulating the development of rural tourism projects appealing to different niche markets (Hill and Gibbons, 1994). For example, in Colorado the Peak-to-Peak trail supports 140 tourism-related projects including food, beverage, accommodation, and recreational and shopping facilities. The route has generated 1,700 jobs, of which 670 are full-time (Long and Edgell, 1997). In Southern Africa 32 tourism routes encompass 791 diverse cultural and ecotourism projects that have generated 5,798 direct full-time and 2,334 part-time jobs (de Villiers, 2003).

In all facets of rural tourism the emphasis is on the local. Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) allege that projects owned by exogenous developers bring minimal direct benefits to the local community. Local economic multipliers are eroded by the purchase of goods and services from businesses external to the area and employment of outsiders to the community negates the benefits of local job creation (Archer, 1982; Butler and Clark, 1992). Conversely, maximisation of local employment, management and ownership of tourism projects and linkages between projects and other economic sectors benefit the local economy (Bramwell, 1994) and help to ensure that economic benefits accrue reasonably equitably to local inhabitants (Brohman, 1996). Hypothetically the more local employment is maximised the more local spending should increase, enhancing the viability of local businesses and services (Eadington and Redman, 1991). Butler (1992), however, alleges that leakages of tourist expenditure from areas featuring small-scale, locally owned projects are likely to be high since less-developed local economies may be unable to satisfy the needs of tourists. Studies in England, which indicate that little visitor spend is retained in the local economy and that whilst some rural operators employ local people and support local products this is by no means universal, confirm this argument (The Countryside Agency, 1999). Caution has been expressed that estimates of the indirect economic benefits of rural tourism within a local community are also inflated (Saeter, 1998) and that expectations of a sector prone to 'income leakages, volatility, declining multiplier, low pay, imported labour and the conservatism of investors' should be realistic (Butler and Clark, 1992:175).

Whilst a significant element of rural tourism is the creation of employment opportunities for women, many of these are perceived as gendered occupations associated with women's place in the labour market or an extension of their work in agriculture or the home (Garcia-Roman et al, 1995; Kinnaird et al, 1994; Lynch and MacWhannell, 2000). While projects such as running a homestay offer self-employment opportunity, income tends to be seasonal and unstable and economic returns correspondingly low (Garcia-Roman et al, 1995; Kinnaird et al, 1994). The point is nonetheless made that in communities with high unemployment, pluriactivity is the norm and part-time or seasonal work can be an advantage (Vaughan and Long, 1982). Entrepreneurial opportunity also serves as a forceful creator of employment in rural areas.

Koh (2000), who argues that it is the spirit of entrepreneurship that drives tourism development in communities, defines tourism entrepreneurs as:

People who harbour a favourable attitude towards the industry; believe that there are opportunities for new tourism enterprises; have the desire to own and operate a tourism enterprise; feel confident in their ability to be enterprising; and are willing to deal with the risks and uncertainties associated with tourism entrepreneurship.

Williams et al (2000) agree that the level of entrepreneurial development and the concentration and dynamism of its networks significantly influence the economic vitality of an area. It has, however, been recognised that many rural tourism operators are lifestyle entrepreneurs whose way of life, hobby or the attractions of living in a rural area form the basis on which tourism projects are built (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Page and Getz, 1997). Since income generation is not the driving force, these operators generally lack entrepreneurial drive (Wanhill, 1997). In any event, residents of rural areas are alleged to commonly exhibit low levels of tourism entrepreneurship (Keane et al, 1992; McKercher and Robbins, 1998), a factor most prevalent in peripheral areas (Wanhill, 1997). Nonetheless, Middleton (2001:198) records that there are approximately 170,000 small and/or medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs) in the United Kingdom generating 500,000 jobs. It is also estimated that in economic terms, micro-businesses (less than ten employees) constitute 95% of tourism operations in Europe, generating one-third of total tourism

revenue (Middleton, 2001:198). There is, however, no indication of how many of these are active in the rural tourism sector.

Whilst lifestyle entrepreneurship and lack of entrepreneurial drive are perceived as symptomatic of problems facing rural tourism in Britain, this is a reflection of only a small proportion of more privileged rural tourism providers in South Africa. As deVilliers (2000) points out, marginalized communities in South Africa have always been extremely creative entrepreneurs eking out a living in highly adverse circumstances. Operationalizing small entrepreneurial projects that build on existing resources such as local culture or handicraft production does not require substantial amounts of capital. It is integrating these projects into the established private tourism sector, which stands accused of myopia in recognizing the value that could be added to the overall tourist experience, that presents a significant problem (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003; Government of South Africa, 1996). The difficulties of linkage and co-operation between established tourism projects and small entrepreneurs are, however, also encountered in other less-developed countries (Dahles, 2000; Dahles and Bras, 1999; Telfer and Wall, 1996). This section of the chapter has analysed the macro impacts of rural tourism on its host environment, the final section examines those factors intrinsic to the commercial success of individual rural tourism projects.

Factors Intrinsic To The Commercial Success of Rural Tourism Projects

Roberts and Hall (2001:196) acknowledge that the success of individual rural tourism businesses is integral to realising a vibrant rural tourism sector. Other researchers concur. For example, Mckercher and Robbins (1998) profess that the strength of the nature-based rural tourism sector is either enhanced or eroded by its individual operators. Getz and Carlsen (2000:549) equally accentuate that 'marginal tourism businesses threaten the (rural tourism) industry as a whole, by driving down prices and lowering standards, and the environment suffers because trade-offs are necessitated'. Middleton (2001:201) argues that the small and medium entrepreneurial sector (SMEs) 'comprises only about one in ten operators who can be classified at the leading edge of good practice. The trailing edge, many of whom are collectively damaging the prospects of the destination in which they are located, may be a third or more of the total operators and they cannot safely be ignored'. Middleton and Hawkins (1998) also assert that it is the individual small tourism

businesses that reflect the uniqueness and character of their host locations and which, through the warmth of their welcome and quality of the attractions, services and activities offered to tourists, significantly influence the quality of the tourist experience.

Whilst their importance to a vibrant rural tourism sector is thus acknowledged, Dolli and Pinfold (1997) accentuate the commercial fragility and high risk of small and medium rural tourism businesses. Contributory factors, such as weather conditions or disasters such as the foot-and-mouth outbreak in Britain, are beyond individual operators' control. However, lack of previous tourism experience, deficient managerial and operational capacity, a general weakness in marketing, finance and general tourism business skills, and unqualified employees, all militate against projects attaining their maximum economic potential (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; Gilbert, 1989; McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999; Shaw and Williams, 1990). Whilst these constraints are self-evident in less-developed countries, such as South Africa, where levels of education and training in rural communities are deficient, there is evidence that weaknesses in general business and financial capacity are equally prevalent in developed countries. For example in Queensland, Australia, one-third of all new tourism businesses failed within the first year and two-thirds failed by the fifth year (Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, 1993). To a significant extent this failure is attributed to the fact that for many small projects 'the preparation of ongoing business plans and the marketing function are seen as peripheral to the management task of running the business' (Page et al, 1999:438).

The neglect to undertake detailed feasibility studies is perceived as a contributory factor in the high failure rate amongst small tourism projects in general (Deloitte Touche Tomatsu, 1994 cited in Page et al, 1999; Winkler 1998 cited in McKercher, 1999). Amongst other benefits, feasibility studies can convince aspiring operators that no amount of marketing can compensate for the lack of commercial viability of proposed projects (McKercher and Robbins, 1998). Lack of understanding of the principles of business planning, a neglect to formulate formal business goals, and the tendency towards adopting a short-term focus as opposed to a long-term strategic view, have also been identified as common features of small tourism businesses

(Deloitte Touche Tomatsu, 1994 cited in Page et al, 1999; Getz and Carlsen, 2000; McKercher and Robbins, 1998) that dominate the rural tourism sector. It is notable that amongst projects with formal business plans there are significantly fewer failures (Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, 1993). These deficiencies are exacerbated by the fact that new rural tourism operators commonly underestimate both their operating costs (McKercher and Robbins, 1998) and the length of time it takes to become established and generate profits (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; McKercher and Robbins, 1998). Respondents to this study report similar shortcomings in Britain and South Africa. These are discussed in Chapter Seven.

The deficiency in business skills and neglect to undertake proper feasibility studies problematize access to seed-capital with which to fund rural tourism projects. The small-scale and lack of financial assets of many rural tourism projects, their frequently remote location and the constraints of seasonality, leads financiers to view new projects as risky propositions (Page and Getz, 1997). Since most aspiring operators have no collateral for loans, banks generally evince little interest in offering funding (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999). In South Africa, access to capital is particularly acute for economically marginalized groups (Government of South Africa, 1996). Under these circumstances it falls upon government, or its agencies, to facilitate access to start-up finance in the form of grants or loan schemes (Getz and Page, 1997), a public sector role identified earlier in this chapter. In Britain, the Wales Tourist Board (2001) indicate that in 2000/2001 their investment services helped support 155 new projects, over 87% of which were small to medium-sized (under 250 employees by European Commission categorization), creating or safeguarding 477 full-time jobs. The European Union, cognisant of the problems experienced by small and medium tourism projects, has also taken steps to support the development of this sector (Buhalis, 1999; Wanhill, 2000).

The importance of high levels of quality and service in securing competitive advantage and offering added value to the consumer are increasingly recognised (Roberts and Hall, 2001). In addition to developing business capacity, project operators need to understand the service ethos and how to interpret visitor needs and perceptions of quality (Fawcett, 1996). However, in Britain, quality management

systems are not afforded priority in small tourism and hospitality businesses (Thomas et al, 1998). Whilst the generation of employment for the local community is perceived as a primary economic benefit of rural tourism, lack of experience in the service sector is common amongst rural residents and the training available limited (Jenkins, 1991; Page and Getz, 1997). This is consistent with findings that the primary recruitment difficulties experienced in small tourism and hospitality projects in Britain result from skills shortages (Thomas et al, 1998). In South Africa low levels of literacy and communication skills amongst indigenous rural communities intensify these difficulties and severely limit the ability of local people to maximise employment opportunities.

Deficient marketing expertise, coupled with difficulties in sourcing reliable market information on which to base decisions regarding the development potential of tourism projects, constrains the effectiveness of the rural tourism sector (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Common deficiencies identified in small tourism and hospitality projects include a lack of formal marketing plans (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999; Thomas et al, 1998), dearth of market research (McKercher and Robbins, 1998), short-term market planning (Thomas et al, 1998) and poor quality, inappropriate marketing activities (Page et al, 1999). This perception of slapdash marketing practice is, however, challenged. Friel (1999) argues that amongst 1400 small businesses surveyed in England, 60 percent had at least a one-year marketing plan, whilst 20 percent had planned for up to three years. There is no indication of how many of these were formal, written plans. Over 50 percent of Friel's (1999) respondents had conducted marketing research, predominantly in the realm of customer needs and service. However, only 20 percent had researched the business environment in which they operated.

It is vital that rural tourism project proponents identify the needs of their market (Gilbert, 1989; World Tourism Organisation, 2002) and differentiate their products from those of their competitors (Roberts and Hall, 2001). This entails market segmentation studies to identify specific target groups and special interest niches that can be filled by innovative project development (Gilbert, 1989; McKercher and Robbins, 1998). In some areas the importance of researching the type of project that

will be supported by tour operators is equally crucial. The dependency of Cypriot agri-tourism on international tour operators (Sharpley, 2002) and rural tourism projects in South Africa on incoming tour operators (Rossouw, 1999) exemplifies this problem. Wanhill (1997) avers that the majority of small tourism projects not included in a tour operator's itinerary are further marginalized by not having access to the marketplace through sophisticated information and reservation systems. While domestic visitors tend to make their own travel arrangements, lack of market access restricts the ability of small projects, particularly in peripheral areas, to target international tourists (Wanhill, 1997).

Gilbert (1989) argues that rural tourism promotion should encompass both the area and the range of experiences on offer, a concept complementary to Greffe's (1994) emphasis on scope. Although the benefits of networks are recognised as crucial to the creation of marketing synergy, there is a proclivity amongst rural tourism operators to act individually thus losing the benefits of coordinated marketing programmes (Hjalager, 1996; Komppula, 2000; Lassila, 2000). Despite their reluctance to become involved in networks, Van der Straaten (2000) alleges that many small rural operators struggle to identify appropriate promotional and communications programmes and uncomplicated booking procedures. In many areas Regional Tourism Organisations have been formed to collaboratively market tourism projects thereby reaping the benefits of reduced costs, access to information (Caalders, 2000; Greffe, 1994; Page and Getz, 1997) and the pooling of resources thus facilitating more effective planning and promotion of the area as an integrated entity (Keane et al, 1992).

An overriding factor that emerges from analysis of the rural tourism sector is the imperative of education and training. The range of training indicated spans a continuum from tourism awareness programmes, designed to stimulate understanding of tourism, to education in the adoption of sound management principles. The need for specialised training in areas such as activity organization, itinerary compilation, tour guiding and safety procedures has also been stressed (Greffe, 1994; Ryan, 1997). Page and Getz (1997) point out that in order to fulfil these needs appropriate, flexible training schemes will have to be devised taking into

account constraints such as accessibility. The heterogeneity of rural tourism suppliers underpins the importance of targeting and tailor-making training to the economic and social needs of a specific sector, for example family run accommodation establishments, if such programmes are to fulfil their purpose (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Lynch, 1998).

The responsibility of the public sector as facilitators of adequate, appropriate training has been identified earlier in this chapter. In South Africa the lack of adequate education, training and awareness is considered 'the greatest deficiency in the tourism industry' (Government of South Africa, 1996:9). It is, however, apparent that there is both inability and intractability amongst small tourism and hospitality operators in accessing the available training and assistance. In Britain, for example, only three percent of 1,394 small tourism and hospitality managers surveyed routinely undergo management training while 42 percent have never participated in such a programme (Thomas et al, 2000). Getz and Carlsen (2000) posit that financial and managerial assistance could be crucial to the success of small family run operations. However, findings of research (Thomas et al, 1998) sustain the argument that many small tourism and hospitality operators do not perceive a need for assistance with the result that institutions offering advice do not effectively penetrate this sector.

A limitation in the studies quoted is that, with few exceptions (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Mc Kercher and Robbins, 1998), these pertained to tourism and hospitality in general rather than being specific to rural tourism. Furthermore, with the exception of Friel (1999) and Thomas et al (1998, 2000) whose studies were undertaken in Britain, the preponderance of the studies are Australasian. Nonetheless, as argued by Roberts and Hall (2001:191) of McKercher and Robbin's (1998) study, the findings are equally relevant to rural tourism businesses in other countries 'the identified business dilemmas they face are identical to those of small rural businesses around the world'. The dearth of comparable studies underscores the paucity of supply-side research in the rural tourism domain and the potential for findings from the evaluation of rural tourism projects to assist in filling this vacuum.

Concluding Points

This chapter commenced with an examination of the role of the public sector as facilitator of an environment conducive to the growth and development of rural tourism. Conflicting intra-government interests and priorities, and the fragmentation of responsibility and role incertitude that permeate the tourism public sector, are perceived as significant constraints in fulfilling its responsibilities. The dual role of the public sector as both governor and facilitator/supporter of the tourism sector was confirmed. Regulatory policy instruments were then examined and land-use control identified as the most effective tool available to local government in managing rural tourism development. The supportive role of the public sector was indicated in the provision of infrastructure, the procurement of funding, the provision of umbrella marketing and research and the facilitation of appropriate, accessible training. The complexities inherent in planning for rural tourism, the importance of its integration into mainstream rural development plans, and the necessity of centring control at local level where sound management of the sector can best be implemented, were emphasised. Whilst these factors underscore the importance of a tourism competent local government, it was acknowledged that it is at this level that lack of tourism knowledge and commitment are most prevalent.

Secondly, the chapter analysed the macro impacts of rural tourism on its host environment. Factors that emerged prominently from this analysis were the imperative of involving local communities in the planning and operation of rural tourism in their area. The importance that the type and scale of projects embarked upon should be both acceptable and supported by local residents and complementary to the sociocultural characteristics of the host community was also recognised. The imperative of economic diversification and integration into the local economy emerged as significant factors in the commercial success of individual projects and in the equitable spread of economic benefits to the host community. The focus on 'local' as a means of optimising employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, maximising the multiplier effects of rural tourism spend and supporting other economic sectors, was identified as a crucial element in effectively stimulating the local economy. Caveats were, however, sounded against over optimistic expectations of the economic benefits to be derived from rural tourism. A pristine, unpolluted

environment was recognised as the predominant resource on which rural tourism is based. Whilst the potential negative impacts of rural tourism on the natural environment were recognized, its dependence on the conservation of this resource base was equally acknowledged.

Finally, the chapter examined the factors intrinsic to the commercial viability of rural tourism projects. Whilst the importance of individual projects to the overall success of the rural tourism sector was recognised, lack of previous tourism experience, combined with deficient managerial and operational capacity, a general weakness in marketing and finance, and unqualified employees, militate against projects attaining their maximum economic potential. These factors emphasise the imperative of education and training, which is seen to be deficient at every level of the rural tourism sector. This deficit extends from engendering tourism competency at local government level, to building managerial and employee capacity at project level, and fostering tourism awareness and understanding at community level. Recognition of the importance of individual projects to the overall performance of the rural tourism sector, and of the fact that tourism impacts originate at project level, underscore the suggestion by this thesis that it is here that the evaluation of rural tourism should eventuate. Benefits include the generation of information that can be used in mitigating the negative and maximising the positive impacts of rural tourism, simultaneously improving the commercial viability of rural tourism projects.

The following chapter introduces the theory of evaluation and probes its practical application in rural tourism projects. The recommendation of Patton's (1997) utilisation-focused evaluation as the most appropriate approach for the evaluation of rural tourism projects is defended and the benefits of evaluation to the rural tourism sector further analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

EVALUATION: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Introduction

This chapter critically discusses the nature and theory of evaluation and probes its practical application in rural tourism projects. The chapter commences with a review of the diverse definitions of evaluation proposed by leading evaluation thinkers and examines the theoretical approaches expounded by its leading scholars. The recommendation of utilisation-focused evaluation as appropriate to the evaluation of rural tourism projects is defended and an analysis of the potential benefits of its application to the rural tourism sector undertaken. Finally the chapter examines studies undertaken by other researchers in relation to the evaluation of various aspects of tourism.

Evaluation: A Conceptual Clarification

Notwithstanding the widespread practice of evaluation, a review of the evaluation literature reveals dissension amongst academics with regard to its interpretation, to the extent that Glass and Ellett (1980:211) allege 'evaluation...is what people say it is; and people currently are saying it is many different things'. The Latin origins of the word 'evaluate' mean 'to strengthen' or 'to empower'. In practice the term has, however, come to denote measurements of worth or value and is often viewed as threatening, rather than as a mechanism of empowerment (Gitlin and Smyth, 1989).

Before examining the definitions of evaluation it is important to make the distinction between monitoring and evaluation, which are equally important and mutually supportive in providing information for each other (Patton 1999; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Monitoring, commonly the function of an internal evaluator who is a member of the project/organisation in which the monitoring is conducted, is an ongoing, repetitive system of information collection to facilitate operational decision-making. It serves as an early warning system alerting project managers and developers to potential problems or providing indications of success (Patton, 1997; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Evaluation, on the

contrary, is time-bound and primarily geared to assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of either ongoing or completed projects. Evaluation undertaken prior to or during the implementation of a project facilitates fundamental decision-making and project improvement. Evaluation conducted after project closure provides a summation of its success or failure and, where relevant, information as to where it failed. Evaluation may be undertaken either by internal or external evaluators (evaluators who are not members of the project/organisation) (Patton, 1997; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Monitoring and evaluation are two elements of the triad. The third is auditing. With auditing accountability is the key component and is confined to an examination of what has been completed. An audit measures neither the impact nor sustainability of a project or programme. The focus rests on measuring performance against compliance with predetermined standards, rules or regulations (Hall, 2000). The interpretations of the theoretical concepts of evaluation as expounded by some prominent evaluation academics, who have made significant contributions in shaping evaluation practice and are representative of diverse evaluation approaches, are now examined.

Scriven (1991:139), an eminent evaluation scholar, defines evaluation as ‘the process of determining the merit, worth, or value,’ of something. To describe the ‘thing’ (a product, project, program or process) being evaluated Scriven coined the term *evaluand* (Shadish et al, 1991). Its use is adopted throughout this text. Scriven argues that the process of evaluation, unlike that of ‘measurement’, does not generally deal with characteristics of the *evaluand* that are one-dimensional. In other words evaluation involves an in-depth examination of both the standards the *evaluand* must meet and its performance against those standards. Only when the data arising from this examination has been integrated and synthesised is the evaluation process complete and conclusions reached. Scriven argues that evaluation differs from traditional empirical research by virtue of its combination of disciplines and the cognisance that must be taken of costs, needs, ethics, political dimensions, sources of bias and techniques for the integration of facts and standards of value rather than hypothesis testing or theory building (Scriven, 1991). Scriven is adamant that evaluation is about valuing and is critical of evaluators who define it as the provision of information (for example Cronbach, 1963) since he believes that the use of its findings is unrelated to its purpose which is deciding what is good or bad about the

evaluand (Scriven 1986a). He disputes claims that there is no objective reality and argues that the most complete picture of reality can be constructed through the use of multiple, different perspectives (Scriven 1983a).

Like Scriven (1980), adjudicating merit as the central tenet of evaluation is also propounded by Weiss (1972b:1) who states 'what all the uses of the word have in common is the notion of judging merit'. Weiss differs from Scriven in the emphasis she places on the use of evaluation findings and in her argument that there are many 'truths' of which evaluation reveals only one (Shadish et al, 1991:175). She is a firm proponent of evaluation as enlightenment which, she propounds, 'does not solve problems; it provides evidence that can be used by men and women of judgment in their efforts to research solutions' (Weiss, 1978:76). Weiss, whose work focuses on evaluation in the policymaking arena, alleges that decision-makers seldom react on the findings of one study, but that the findings of several studies, over time, have a cumulative effect on the way they act and on their decision-making deliberations.

Patton (1999:13) refers to evaluation as a 'reality testing' exercise, which utilizes logic and evidence, to establish whether what is believed to be true of the evaluand, is in fact 'real' or factual. Evaluation is, he argues, 'a mechanism for finding out whether what's supposed to be or hoped to be going on is, in fact, going on – a form of reality testing' (Patton, 1997:28). Patton (1997) recognizes that people involved in evaluand operation or management become complacent in the belief that their perceptions of the evaluand are valid and that to such people 'reality testing' carries connotations of threat and is met with antagonism and resistance. Patton acknowledges that the concept of reality is problematic but argues that it is the stakeholders' own sense of reality about the evaluand that evaluation should help them test. Patton's (1997:38) concept of 'reality testing' thus implies a 'commonsense connotation of finding out what is happening'.

Pawson and Tilley (1997:xii) also champion the concept of 'reality' promoting what they term 'realistic evaluation'. They conceive of reality as context-dependent and encompassing understanding of the balance in relationships between individuals and

organisations, behaviours and interventions, disagreements, power-plays and interdependencies and the choices available to the people involved. Pawson and Tilley (1997) emphasise that, whilst evaluation is meant to augment the knowledge of stakeholders, justify decision-making and inform the thinking of policy-makers, there is no uniform pattern of evaluation that will be constructive in all circumstances. They thus contend that 'being realistic means trying to perfect a particular method of evaluation which will work for a specific class of project in well-circumscribed circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:xiv). They are critical of approaches that allege that the scope of what can be evaluated is limitless (for example Scriven, 1980) or, which by their focus on the use and users of evaluation findings (for example Patton, 1997), place evaluators in danger of becoming 'technicians' in the hands of those commissioning the evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:18).

Wholey (1986b:6), whose work predominantly comprises social programme evaluation at a federal level, defines evaluation as 'the comparison of actual programme performance with some standards of expected programme performance and the drawing of conclusions about programme effectiveness and value'. Wholey's theory of evaluation is focused on management and policy-makers and on motivating action and change. His perspective on truth is that it depends 'on what works in practice, especially as decided by management' (Shadish et al, 1991:249). Wholey's approach is criticised on the basis that his focus on those who have influence over the evaluand may lead to performance data biased in their favour. Like Patton (1997) and Weiss (1978), Wholey places importance on the usefulness of evaluation findings, in particular their use by management in improving social programmes. Wholey (1983) argues that while the efficacy of private firms is judged by their profitability, government funded programmes are frequently wasteful and ineffective. Evaluation, Wholey (1983) asserts, provides government with information relative to the effectiveness of their programmes in the same way profitability does to private firms. He argues that since management controls the use of evaluation findings there is a need to work with and motivate them to use these findings as a tool in attaining progress toward achieving outcomes that fulfil programme goals and objectives (Wholey, 1983).

Fetterman (2001:3) adopts an empowerment approach to evaluation, defined as 'the use of evaluation concepts, techniques and findings to foster improvement and self-determination...the assessment of a programme's value and worth is not the endpoint of the evaluation ...but is part of an ongoing process of programme improvement'. Fetterman (2001) emphasises that empowerment evaluation is a collaborative and participative activity in which issues of concern to an entire community are openly debated. 'This approach is used to empower rather than to judge, to share skills and knowledge rather than to find fault, and to improve programme practice' Fetterman (2001:17).

Analysis and comparison of the diverse approaches and interpretations of evaluation and selecting that most appropriate for utilization in the evaluation of rural tourism projects is complex. The preponderance of the prolific volume of academic evaluation literature is focused on educational or social welfare programmes or projects. Literature from the operational/stakeholder/developer sector (such as the United Nations Development Programme, The World Bank, or the Kellogg Foundation) is focused on poverty relief and social development projects or programmes. Patton (1997:431), an academic experienced in a wide field of project evaluations including corporate planning and wilderness experiences, appears to be the most 'interdisciplinary evaluation generalist'.

Evaluation literature in the field of tourism is sparse. Faulkner (1997) has devised a model for the evaluation of national tourism destination marketing programmes and a framework for monitoring the impacts of tourism events (Faulkner, 2003). Evaluation has been advocated in the tourism policy domain (Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Hall, 2000) and monitoring and evaluation in the operational field has been identified as imperative if the industry is to be sustainably planned and managed (Nelson, 1993). However, despite Middleton and Hawkins (1998) contention that most destinations are substantially impacted by the cumulative management decisions of their multifarious small tourism operators, a central conclusion to emerge from the literature is the realization that there are minimal studies pertaining to the evaluation

of rural tourism projects or their impacts upon the rural environment. Exceptions are projects applying for or utilising public sector funding but even here evaluation is commonly limited to financial feasibility and viability studies (Mill and Morrison, 1992; Wanhill, 1994, 2000). Contacts with members of the Evaluation Society in both Britain and the United States of America have not elicited any information with regard to evaluation in tourism. An aim of this thesis is thus to obtain a deeper and more pragmatic understanding of the potential use of evaluation in rural tourism projects and to gain greater insight into which evaluation approach is germane to this field. The theories underlying various evaluation doctrines are now further examined.

The Three Stages of Evaluation

Shadish et al's (1991) three-stage categorisation is adopted in analyzing the theories of evaluation practice. Stage one theorists, primarily from the 1960s, were positivists who endorsed rigorous scientific methods of research in solving social problems. Their theoretical contribution was principally in relation to concepts of valuing and knowledge construction. Stage two theorists typified the movement of the 1970s during which evaluators sought alternative evaluation approaches with a view to taking greater cognizance of how social programmes operated and how evaluation findings were used, particularly in policy-making. Stage three theorists centered their work on integrating the concepts, methods and practices developed by their predecessors into a 'more coherent approach to evaluation' (Shadish et al, 1991:66).

The academic debate relating to the use of theory in evaluation is as wide-ranging as is defining evaluation's meaning. Some authors (Chen, 1990; Pawson and Tilley, 1997) posit that all evaluation should be theory led. Scriven (1991:360) conversely contends that theories are 'not even essential for explanations and explanations are not essential for 99 percent of all evaluations. It is a gross though frequent blunder to suppose that one needs a theory...in order to evaluate'. In contrast Pawson and Tilley (1997), who argue that the theory utilized in an evaluation is drawn from the systems and contexts in which the evaluand is initiated and employed, challenge Scriven's contention. Others (Shadish et al, 1991) aver that it is the realistic, down-to-earth ideas developed in evaluation practice, which form the basis of academic evaluation theory and that it is theory that indicates which methods should be utilized

and combined in a given situation and which are likely to yield greater benefit. This study concurs with the middle-path between the protagonists and antagonists of evaluation theory as proposed by House and Howe (1999:112) who suggest that good evaluation practice is 'informed by theory, not totally derived from it' and posit that while theory is used to justify and inform practice, practice equally informs theory. It is symptomatic of the dissension pervading evaluation that, whilst Pawson and Tilley (1997) deride Scriven's rejection of the need for evaluation theory, others describe him as 'one of the earliest evaluation theorists...Scriven has affected how we talk about evaluation more than any other theorist' (Shadish et al, 1991:74). The following section of this chapter considers Shadish et al's (1991) three stages of evaluation and adopts their concepts of knowledge construction, valuing, evaluation practice and the use of evaluation findings as the focus of its analysis.

Stage One Theorists

Knowledge Construction

Stage One theorists (for example Campbell, 1978; Scriven, 1980) contend that evaluation is a science in which priority is given to truth. Some theorists of this school (for example Scriven, 1983a) adopt the positivist view that valid knowledge about reality can be constructed, that the purpose of evaluation is to formulate value statements and that these statements are matters of fact, not opinion. Whilst acknowledging that constructions of reality are neither complete nor undistorted, they believe that using multiple perspectives helps to build a more holistic picture. Others (for example Campbell, 1960, 1978) argue that no way of constructing knowledge is perfect and seek truth through scientific methods of quantification and experimentation. The use of findings is justified only if they have withstood the most rigorous tests. Scientific-experimental models that prioritise impartiality, accuracy, objectivity and the validity of information generated, are the historically dominant evaluation strategies of stage one theorists (Shadish et al, 1991).

The Values in Evaluation

Amongst the most fervent disagreements in evaluation are those relating to the issue of values. Some stage-one theorists believed that evaluation should be value-free. For example, Campbell argued that there was an epistemological gap between science

and values. Values, he alleged, have no cognitive basis and can neither be justified nor rationally discussed (House and Howe, 1999). On the other hand Scriven (1991) is resolute that evaluation is about constructing value statements and moving from facts to evaluative conclusions. He promotes a prescriptive theory of valuing in which the selection of evaluation criteria are linked to an assessment of needs and draws a sharp distinction between 'a needs assessment' and 'a wants assessment' arguing that criteria of needs must take precedence over criteria of wants (Scriven, 1983a:259). House and Howe (1999) describe the difference between 'needs' and 'wants' in these terms. 'Needs' are what people have a right to such as equality, food, shelter and health care whereas 'wants' are merely something desired such as a better car or a new house.

Scriven (1986a) rejects the descriptive approach to valuing in which stakeholder input is elicited in identifying the criteria used in judging the worth of the evaluand. He perceives it as compromised and disparages evaluators who practice it as puppets, obligated to accept the values of stakeholders regardless of their merit. Like Scriven, House and Howe (1999) opine that both facts and values can be subjected to rational argument and that, in using unequivocally defensible evaluation frameworks, evaluators are able to collect evidence and debate the truth of evaluative judgements. They nonetheless caution that prescriptive valuing should be utilised cautiously and only in evaluations where substantial value agreement exists. Shadish et al (1991), however, argue that advocating a prescriptive theory of valuing, and conducting an evaluation on this basis, is seldom perceived as fair since some values are prioritised over others and thus lack public credibility. Kenny (1982) similarly criticises the adoption of prescriptive values arguing that those prescribing them are, unsolicited, speaking for a group of which they are not part. He labels this elitist and contends that whilst evaluators may show concern for others, they cannot speak for them.

Scriven's concerns about bias led him to develop an evaluation metatheory, 'a theory about theories' (Scriven, 2003:15), which 'describes how and why value statements are constructed' (Shadish et al, 1991:48). Scriven's (1980) logic of evaluation, an explanatory metatheory, includes four steps in constructing a value statement.

- 1) The criteria of merit on which the evalualand must perform well are identified;

2) the performance standards, for each criterion against which the evaluand will be judged, are set; 3) data are collected that measure the performance of the evaluand against the standards set for each criterion; and 4) results are integrated and synthesised into value statements. Pawson and Tilley (1997:xiii), however, reject this approach contending that 'there is no universal logic of evaluation, no absolute science of valuing, no general warranty for decision-making applicable to all judgements'. While values determine how the criteria for an evaluation will be selected, evaluation practice answers questions as to whether: 1) an evaluation should be undertaken; 2) the purpose it should serve; 3) the design of the evaluation; 4) the questions it will ask; and 5) the role the evaluator will play (Shadish et al, 1991).

Evaluation Practice

First stage theorists advocate outcome-based practices and opine that evaluators should maintain a distance from stakeholders so as to avoid compromising the evaluation's integrity. For Campbell (1978) this meant making use of experiments. To Scriven (1980) it involves adherence to a format, known as a key evaluation checklist, which sets out advice with regard to issues such as function, process, context and resources to be considered by evaluators. It is also a guide for meta-evaluation, a facet on which Scriven (1980) places particular emphasis as a means of controlling evaluator bias since meta-evaluation involves enabling others, preferably an external evaluator, to evaluate the evaluation. Patton (1997:143) defines meta-evaluation as 'evaluating the evaluation based on the profession's standards and principles...so that stakeholders have a credible review of an evaluation's strengths and weaknesses'. Scriven (1980) thus clearly defines the practice of evaluation and opens it to scrutiny by other evaluators. Numerous evaluation experts (for example Patton, 1997; Rossi et al, 1999) however emphasise that the intrinsic worth of the evaluation process lies in the use of its findings.

The Uses of Evaluation

There are various types of use to which evaluation findings may be put. These are instrumental - decisions are made based on evaluation results; conceptual - results

influence the way in which stakeholders think about an issue; or persuasive - results are used to argue that a decision is the correct one (Rossi et al, 1999). Stage one theorists do not place as much emphasis on the use of evaluation findings as do stage two and three theorists. Campbell (1978), a doyen of first-stage evaluation theorists, in fact argued that active promotion of use by evaluators could be detrimental to the credibility of evaluation results, therefore he was not concerned by the fact that many evaluation findings were not used (Salasin, 1973; Shadish et al, 1991).

Despite Scriven's protestation that the use of evaluation findings is secondary to its judgement of worth or merit, he was the first theorist to describe different usages of evaluation by coining the terms formative and summative evaluation (Shadish et al, 1991). Formative evaluation, generally undertaken as an aid to improving, strengthening or enhancing the evaluand, examines its delivery and implementation quality (Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991). The evaluator generally works with project planners (in a pre-implementation evaluation), or managers and participants in the operational stage of a project, in designing and conducting the evaluation (Patton, 1997; Rossi et al, 1999). Summative evaluation generally takes place at the end of an evaluand's life or at the end of some phase of it. It examines the effects of the evaluand, indicates how well it has met pre-determined criteria, and serves as a tool to document and communicate its worth, value and results. Evaluation is judgement-oriented and generally conducted on behalf of external decision-makers, funders or other interested parties (Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991).

Whilst this study is not in accord with Scriven's theoretical approach to evaluation, it has respect for the clarity and unambiguity of his 'logic of evaluation'. This study is critical of first stage theorists in their approach to evaluation as 'judgement' as opposed to 'learning' where information is gathered that is useful in improving the evaluand. The approach of distancing the evaluator from the stakeholders of the evaluand is undoubtedly not conducive to developing understanding, acceptance of the findings or motivation to utilise those findings in improving individual projects and cumulatively the rural tourism sector as a whole. The exclusive use of a positivist approach is also not considered optimal in the rural tourism sector where

much of the data gathered will be dependant upon explanation and understanding of issues 'on-the-ground'. The methods utilised in conducting the evaluation should, in the rural tourism domain, be dependent upon the context in which the project is to be evaluated (for example the stage of the project) and the type of information it seeks to gather as opposed to being restricted to the findings that a particular approach will generate. Whilst Scriven's approach to evaluation is possibly appropriate for large-scale publicly funded programmes, its relevance to the evaluation of average, small-scale rural tourism projects is questionable. Such an approach would be construed as an 'inspection' to be rejected as intrusive and threatening. Useful findings, emanating from the evaluation, would be thus be largely negated by virtue of project operators' opposition. Furthermore the purpose of evaluation as a learning tool, as envisaged by this study, is not accommodated in this approach. Whilst stage one theorists applied traditional scientific standards, second stage theorists adopted a more pragmatic stance prioritising issues of utility and practicality.

Second Stage Theorists

Knowledge Construction

Second stage theorists (for example Stake, 1978; Weiss, 1978; Wholey, 1983) argue that evaluators should identify and work closely with the users of evaluation findings to generate useful information which, unlike amongst first stage theorists, is given higher priority than truth. Certainty with regard to knowledge is traded-off against knowledge that best serves the particular circumstances (Shadish et al, 1991). Whilst first stage theorists emphasise causation, generalisation and explanation, second stage theorists (for example Weiss, 1978) believe that evaluation exposes one of many truths and assign higher priority to issues such as implementation, evaluation and description and discovery. It was amongst second stage theorists that the quantitative/qualitative evaluation debate was born and evaluators moved towards methodological pluralism (Shadish et al, 1991).

The Values in Evaluation

Many second stage evaluation scholars (Patton, 1997; Stake, 2003; Weiss, 1983a, 1983b) use descriptive valuing. Stakeholder input is elicited in identifying the criteria used in evaluating the evaluand and insight is sought into their perceptions of the

evaluand's worth and how it can be improved. Stake (2003:63,65) for example, describes what he terms 'responsive evaluation' as 'not particularly responsive to programme theory or stated goals but more to stakeholder concerns...Placing value on the programme is not seen as an act separate from experiencing it'. Shadish et al (1991) consider the approach of second stage theorists, which attempts to include a plurality of values, to be more practical in ensuring that stakeholders perceive the evaluation as relevant to them, leading to greater co-operation in utilising or implementing its findings. House and Howe (1999), however, reject the use of purely descriptive valuing claiming that it turns evaluators into reporters of stakeholder values rather than allowing them to explore, inform and interpret. They allege that as knowledge and values are entangled, so too are descriptive and prescriptive valuing, and that most evaluations in fact make use of both.

Once again the middle-of-the-road approach adopted by House and Howe (1999) is more appropriate for use in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The criteria to be used in conducting such an evaluation would, it is suggested, be selected by stakeholders from the proposed index of criteria developed by respondents in this research. Nonetheless, in the greater picture such an evaluation would be relatively meaningless if stakeholders were to exclude all criteria pertaining to sociocultural project impacts on the community or those on the physical environment and concentrated only on criteria pertinent to the well-being of projects themselves. There would thus necessarily be some degree of prescription in ensuring that criteria pertaining to the benefits and costs of projects to the wider community are included.

Evaluation Practice

A significant change in practice between first stage and later theorists was the advocacy that evaluators work closely with stakeholders of evaluands. Opinions however differed as to who qualified as a stakeholder. For example, the focus of Weiss's (1983a, 1983b) work was policy and decision-makers at federal and state level. Wholey (1983) proposed that program managers be integrated throughout the evaluation process to ensure that the information provided pertained to issues over which they could exert influence. Stake (1978), on the other hand, concentrated on local stakeholders.

Although stage two theorists advocated the introduction of new procedures, most advice confined evaluators to the adoption of only a single practice the choice of which differed from theorist to theorist. For example, Wholey (1983), whose evaluation focused on program management, opted for a quantitative approach, while Stake (1978, 2003) professes preference for the use of case studies. Weiss (1990), who articulates disappointment at the lack of utilization of evaluation findings, became a methodological pluralist recommending the use of multiple methods in order to report both important and useful information (Shadish et al, 1991). Patton also supports a mixed methods approach to evaluation in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilised. 'There is a healthy interaction between the two approaches each of which gives us part of a picture and has weaknesses. The combination gives us a better perspective' (Patton, 1999:33).

The Uses of Evaluation

Second stage theorists emphasise the use of evaluation findings. They argue that a wide range of uses should be considered and that evaluators should determine the information needs of those stakeholders who will be its users (Shadish et al, 1991). Despite the widespread practice of evaluation, Weiss (1990) avers that its findings have minimal credibility in the eyes of policy makers and others whom it is meant to influence. Both Weiss and Stake advocate the incremental (enlightenment) use of evaluation findings positing that:

Research need not necessarily be geared to the operating feasibilities of today...as new concepts and data emerge their gradual cumulative effect can be to change the conventions policymakers abide by and to reorder the goals and priorities of the practical policy world (Weiss, 1977b:544).

Conversely, Wholey (1983) promotes the instrumental use of evaluation findings and posits that producing results, which have immediate application, should be a goal of evaluation (Shadish et al, 1991). Patton (1999:19), the architect of utilisation-focused evaluation, espouses 'no matter how rigorous the methods of data collection, design and reporting are in evaluation, if it does not get used it is a bad evaluation'.

In selecting research methods focus should thus be on the uses and users of evaluation findings. Patton (1997) argues that no evaluation can answer all potential questions or serve all potential stakeholders. He agrees with Weiss that enlightenment approaches to evaluation are useful but is nonetheless an ardent proponent of the instrumental use of evaluation findings in which a decision or action is a direct result of the evaluation (Patton, 1997).

The evaluation approach proposed by this thesis is in accord with stage two theorists' concern with the use of evaluation findings and their recognition of the need to work with the stakeholders of the evaluand. There is value in both Weiss's (1990) enlightenment approach and Patton's (1997) instrumental approach. The concept of 'enlightenment' (Weiss, 1990:176) is as valid to the tourism public sector as to Weiss's federal and state decision-makers. The enlightenment approach may also over time identify patterns across projects, provide lessons that can be transferred to other projects and cumulatively build knowledge and extrapolate principles regarding what works in projects (Patton, 1999). The ongoing accumulation of knowledge and understanding of the impact and operation of individual rural tourism projects and the aggregated deeper understanding of the rural tourism sector should result in more informed decision-making, improved management practices and better informed rural tourism policy and plans. Patton's (1997) advocacy of instrumental use, whereby evaluation results are used to support decision-making, identify evolving problems and proactively decide on strategies, corrective measures and revisions to plans and resource allocations (Wholey and McLaughlin, 1998), is equally important. The rural tourism sector is in need of sound, valid information that facilitates proactive action in overcoming negative impacts generated by projects or helps circumvent impending project failure. Evaluation should generate the information necessary to provide the impetus for action to improve current practice.

This study is also in agreement with those scholars (Patton, 1997; Weiss, 1990) who advocate the use of multiple methods in conducting an evaluation. No one method will adequately garner the diverse information posed by the index of suggested criteria formulated by respondents to this study. Methods selected should, as

previously denoted, be those best suited to generating the type of information sought, the acquisition of which is basically the reason for undertaking the evaluation in the first place. The evaluation approach adopted by second stage theorists is perceived by this thesis as more practically grounded and its findings thus infinitely more likely to find use and acceptance by both tourism policy-makers and on-the-ground rural tourism operators.

Third Stage Theorists

Knowledge Construction

Third stage theorists (for example Cronbach 1982a, 1982b; Rossi and Freeman, 1985) recognize that evaluation is characterised by multiple epistemologies, methods and priorities and that there is no one answer to constructing knowledge (Shadish et al, 1991). They advocate methodological pluralism in which choices are dependent upon the information needed and believe that no one method can produce a complete, unbiased answer (Cook, 1985). Stage three theorists thus integrate the concepts, methods and practices of their predecessors in selecting those most appropriate to their task (Shadish et al, 1991).

Cronbach defines evaluation as ‘the collection and use of information to make decisions...many types of decisions are to be made and many varieties of information are useful’ (Cronbach, 1963:672). This has led Windrum and de Jong (2000) to argue that Cronbach does not prioritise any particular type of knowledge. Rossi et al (1999), on the other hand, agree with first stage theorists that evaluations should meet the high standards of research but also agree with second stage theorists that the findings of evaluation should meet the information needs of decision-makers. They thus argue that evaluators must strike a balance between the validity of evaluation findings and their usefulness to the decision-makers and stakeholders of the evaluand.

The Values in Evaluation

Third stage theorists differ in their approaches to valuing. Cronbach (1982a) tends strongly towards descriptive values, advocates that criteria for evaluation should be based on stakeholder values and firmly promotes the role of the evaluator as educator as opposed to judge. Rossi and Freeman (1985), on the other hand, adopt an approach closer to that of Scriven placing emphasis on needs assessment and advocating that social needs should be the primary criterion of merit in the evaluation of programmes. Rossi et al (1999), however, agree that the values applied will differ dependent upon the type of evaluand. The values used in business driven evaluations will, for example, differ from those in evaluations of social programmes. Values, like methods, are thus context dependent.

Evaluation Practice

Like stage two theorists, stage three theorists advocate working closely with stakeholders of the evaluand. House and Howe (1999) deem it impractical to include the interests of every stakeholder. Their compromise is to include the interests of only major stakeholders, at the same time cautioning that inadvertently excluding a major stakeholder group biases a study. Other theorists (Patton, 1997; Rossi and Freeman, 1985) assert that stakeholders may be deemed to include anyone who has decision-making power and/or anyone who requires information about the evaluand.

Cronbach (1982a:321) argues that evaluators should use diverse methods in finding answers to multiple evaluation questions and that the methods selected are contingent upon the type of information required and the stage of evaluand development. He argues that no single method can have preference over another and that 'there is no single best plan for an evaluation, not even for an enquiry into a particular programme, at a particular time, with a particular budget'. Rossi et al (1999:2) promote comprehensive evaluation 'that covers the need for the programme, its design, implementation, impact and efficiency'. They, however, acknowledge that time and resource constraints mean that comprehensive evaluation is not always feasible and recommend that 'every evaluation must be tailored to its programme. The tasks that evaluators undertake depend on the purpose of the evaluation, the

conceptual and organisational structure of the programme and the resources available' (Rossi et al, 1999:37). Whilst Rossi and Freeman (1985) advocate a focus on different questions dependent on the stage of the evaluand, they nonetheless argue that evaluations at different stages of evaluand development are not wholly different and that there are many generic qualities in the design of all evaluations.

The Uses of Evaluation

Third stage theorists integrate and promote both instrumental and enlightenment use of evaluation findings. Like Patton, Rossi et al (1999:431) argue that use of the findings is pivotal to an evaluation 'in the end, the worth of evaluations must be judged by their utility'. In order to facilitate use Rossi and Freeman (1985) posit that participation in the evaluation design process should incorporate stakeholder interests and that evaluation findings should be presented timeously, simply and concisely. Rossi and Freeman (1985) envisage the identification of stakeholders and the dissemination of the evaluation findings as a function of the evaluator. Although Cronbach (1982b) accepts both instrumental and enlightenment viewpoints he is closely aligned to Weiss in his assertion that the use made of evaluation findings is more of the enlightenment than the instrumental variety. Cronbach believes that facilitation of instrumental use requires the prior identification of potential users and their concerns and that the evaluator should maintain contact after the evaluation to ensure that findings are utilized (Windrum and de Jong, 2000).

This study is in agreement with Rossi et al (1999) that the values used in an evaluation will differ dependent upon the evaluand. What is however crucial in the evaluation of rural tourism projects is that a balance is struck between the economic and political values of the public sector, the 'needs' of the wider community and the profit driven values of rural tourism operators. In an attempt to achieve this balance respondents in this study have been drawn from diverse expert groups in the rural tourism field and findings in relation to the index of criteria, manner of implementation and involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation of rural tourism projects, are based on their response. The knowledge and values, expressed in the proposed index of criteria developed by respondents in this study, are thus entangled

and entwined (House and Howe, 1999) and unable to be separated one from the other. The values, from the perspective of the respondents, are both descriptive and prescriptive in that, in the opinion of some respondents it is the interests of the marginalized sectors of rural communities that must be prioritised. The ultimate selection of criteria from the suggested index of criteria developed by this study will be neither bias free nor value neutral since such selection will be based upon the priorities of those stakeholders who are included in the decision-making process. Rossi et al's (1999) concept of tailored evaluation is considered germane to the evaluation of rural tourism projects that progress through stages of pre-implementation, operation and closure/business failure and require specific focus on different evaluation criteria dependent on their stage of evolution.

Shadish et al (1991) acknowledge that overlaps occur in attempting to classify theorists into first, second or third stage. Patton, for example, in keeping with stage two theorists, emphasises a focus on the use of evaluation findings. At the same time, like third stage theorists, he advocates that decisions on which methods to use should be based on 'getting the best possible data to adequately answer primary user's evaluation questions...The emphasis is on appropriateness and credibility' (Patton, 1997:247). There is another group of theorists, referred to as fourth generation, whose evaluation practice has exposed them to harsh critique from more traditional (stage one type) evaluation scholars.

Fourth Generation Theorists

Fourth generation theorists Lincoln and Guba (1985:143) argue that there is no such thing as 'objective reality' and that each person's reality is constructed according to his/her own understanding and life circumstances. For example, the reality of poverty will be very different for someone living in such circumstances and an outsider who tries to interpret its meaning. Guba (1981) denounces the objectivist view of only one reality and propounds that what is important is assuring balance and fairness in which multiple realities are given equal weight. Guba and Lincoln (1989) similarly espouse that truth, like reality, does not exist and is merely the consensus arrived at between individuals and groups and has no meaning beyond this. They view

evaluation as a process in which the realities of multiple stakeholders are accommodated and negotiated in a collaborative process culminating eventually in consensus. In this approach all affected stakeholders are consulted and no knowledge claims, including the evaluator's, are given privileged status. The role of the evaluator is perceived as one of facilitating dialogue and negotiation amongst stakeholders in order that a shared construction of the value and significance of the evaluand can be reached (Rossi et al, 1999).

Guba and Lincoln's (1989) evaluation approach carries the concept of inclusiveness to the extreme, earning derision from Pawson and Tilley (1997:18) who claim that this demonstrates lack of priorities, includes impractically long lists of potential stakeholders in order to represent all views, and positions the evaluator as a 'ringmaster'. Traditional evaluation scholars reject the more radical evaluation practices espoused by fourth generation theorists. Sechrest (1992:2) refers to them as 'rebellious evaluators'. He denigrates their claim to morality in their evaluation practices and asserts 'they should know that morality, like so many other things is in the eye of the beholder. They do not look so extraordinarily moral to me' (Sechrest, 1992:5). House and Howe (1999:60) are equally critical positing that all viewpoints cannot be given equal weight 'some viewpoints will be better than others – some will be factually incorrect and some will be morally wrong'.

Where Fetterman, also perceived as a radical, fourth generation theorist, differs from other evaluators who support stakeholder involvement and participative evaluation (for example Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1997; Wholey, 1983) is his focus on evaluation as an aid to self-determination. Fetterman (2001) internalises evaluation. In other words participants in the evaluand are assisted by an external evaluator to conduct a self-evaluation (Fetterman, 2001). Known as empowerment evaluation, this approach is harshly criticised by other evaluation scholars. Scriven (1997) posits that whilst delegating partial responsibility for an evaluation to participants is to be recommended, delegating them the right of total self-evaluation is open to bias and its findings lack credibility. Stufflebeam (1994:323) is more critical and vociferously argues that whilst evaluators may assist in training or programme development, the

objective of evaluation is to make a judgement 'while helping people help themselves is a worthy goal, it is not the fundamental goal of evaluation'. Stufflebeam (1994:326) further claims that 'empowerment evaluations will produce public relations exercises or worse, rather than objective evaluation findings'. Nonetheless, empowerment evaluation has proved useful in helping communities to evaluate their own projects (Fetterman, 2001) and could provide a constructive tool in the ongoing struggle for capacity building and self-determination, particularly in less-developed countries.

Whilst rural tourism projects may be of interest to an extremely wide audience, adoption of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) total inclusivity approach would be impractical and, particularly in small projects, render the evaluation unworkable. The family of tourism stakeholders is vast, carries with it conflicting interests and agendas and includes varying levels of capacity to understand and contribute to the evaluation process. In view of the fact that neither time nor cost would permit a protracted process, attempting total inclusivity would thus be self-defeating. Personal experience by the researcher of similar situations has taught that attempting such a process in the wrong circumstances leads to chaos, frustration and greater polarisation between interest groups than that which previously existed.

This study does not dispute the potential utility of empowerment evaluation in community-based rural tourism projects in less-developed countries. Its focus on 'disenfranchised, oppressed and economically impoverished populations' (Fetterman, 2001:114), however, renders it unsuitable as a blanket evaluation approach in rural tourism projects. Its concern for participation, improvement and capacity building are nonetheless fundamental factors that, based on the lack of capacity in the rural tourism sector, identified in Chapter Two, warrant consideration in the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Clearly from the above analysis it can be seen that evaluation theorists differ no less on issues of practice than they do on issues of knowledge construction, values or usage. Rossi et al (1999:33) acknowledge that 'there is probably as much diversity in

outlook among evaluators about the utility of evaluation theory as there is about the right way of doing evaluations'. They nonetheless argue that 'the evaluator's task is to creatively weave together many competing concerns and objectives into a tapestry in which different viewers can find different messages' (Rossi et al, 1999:33). In order to overcome the differences in evaluation practice a set of evaluation standards was formulated.

Evaluation Standards

Patton (1997) contends that it was programme funders scepticism with regard to the cost and relevance of evaluation data that led to the development of standards, or levels of quality, to which evaluators could be held accountable. These incorporate issues of utility, propriety, feasibility and accuracy (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994).

1) Utility standards aim to ensure that accurate, useful, relevant information that meets the needs of intended users is generated by the evaluation. The right factors must be addressed and the relationship between the criteria evaluated and the success of the evaluand must be valid and reasonable (Wholey and Mc Laughlin, 1998).

2) Propriety standards relate to the legal and ethical manner in which the evaluation is undertaken and the regard in which the well-being of stakeholders is held. Evaluators face dilemmas with regard to the relationships between themselves, participant stakeholders and the clients who have commissioned the evaluation. Whilst interpersonal interaction with participants fosters mutual understanding, professional integrity may be jeopardised by intimate, collaborative relationships. Similarly relationships with decision-makers may jeopardise impartiality and credibility. The dangers of becoming a political pawn or being perceived as the tool of one particular interest group are equally ubiquitous. Adherence to the ethos of propriety standards is thus imperative (Patton, 1997).

3) Feasibility standards undertake that the evaluation will be realistic, cost effective and directed at providing useful information. Patton (1997) asserts that gathering irrelevant information wastes scarce financial and human resources and greatly reduces the chances that evaluation findings will be utilised. Others (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:xiii) argue that there is little point in undertaking an evaluation that does

not 'inform the thinking of policy makers, practitioners, program participants and the public'. Weiss (1980:90) equally alleges that 'an evaluation should not be done at all if there is no prospect for its being useful to some audiences'.

4) Accuracy standards are intended to ensure that adequate, correct information will be furnished regarding the evaluation findings. Conducting a meta-evaluation, as proposed by Scriven (1980), would ensure that evaluation meets the required standards of accuracy.

Analysis of the properties of evaluation and reflection upon the advantages and disadvantages of diverse approaches was undertaken to establish the appropriateness of each for application in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. It is concluded that Patton's (1997) utilization-focused evaluation, which includes elements of both second and third stage evaluation approaches, is most appropriate to the evaluation of rural tourism projects. In what follows a more detailed examination is made of utilisation-focused evaluation and the rationale for its selection is defended.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation.

Utilization-focused evaluation describes the evaluation approach developed and propounded by Patton. It is defined as:

The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programmes to make judgments about the programme, improve programme effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming. Utilization-focused programme evaluation...is evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses (Patton, 1997:23).

If the components of this definition are analysed it becomes apparent that utilization-focused evaluation will accomplish the purposes for which rural tourism project evaluation is suggested by this study. The definition suggests four specific reasons for undertaking an evaluation. These include making judgements, improving the evaluand's effectiveness, informing decisions about future evaluands and providing information for the specific use of specific users. The relevance of each of these to the evaluation of rural tourism projects is examined.

Making Judgements

The primary purpose of the evaluation of rural tourism projects is not envisaged as judgemental. Nonetheless judgements will need to be made about the impacts of rural tourism projects on the sociocultural, socioeconomic and physical environment. Utilization-focused evaluation affords the opportunity for these judgements to be made.

Improving the Evaluand's Effectiveness

Improving the effectiveness of rural tourism projects is perceived by this study as crucial in maximising the benefits and minimising the negative impacts of the sector. Economic effectiveness, market penetration, entrepreneurial stimulation and adaptive management strategies to ameliorate negative impacts on the natural or human environment can be enhanced by greater understanding of the functioning of rural tourism projects. Utilization-focused evaluation provides the information required to identify where and what improvement is advocated.

Informing Future Decisions and Providing Specific Information For Specific Users

Decision-making is an ongoing facet of any project. Information garnered from evaluation facilitates informed decision-making with regard to issues such as expansion, diversification of activities or refurbishment of premises, an instrumental use of findings (Patton, 1997) providing information specific to project operators. Responsibility for decision-making with regard to rural tourism development in an area is vested in the public sector. Information, aggregated from utilization-focused evaluation undertaken at the individual project level, will assist public sector decision-makers in accumulating the knowledge required to formulate more appropriate tourism policy, plans and management strategies, an enlightenment use of findings (Weiss, 1990) providing information specific to public sector support and governance. Other specific users could include potential developers, project funders or community organisations amongst others. Evaluation findings would assist such users in taking decisions pertaining to future rural tourism projects.

It is clear that the reasons, embraced in Patton's definition, for undertaking an evaluation - making judgements, improving the evaluand's effectiveness, informing decisions about future evaluands and providing information for the specific use of specific users (Patton, 1997) - are apposite to those proposed by this study for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. There are nonetheless other factors that must be considered. These include situational responsiveness or context, stakeholder participation in the evaluation of rural tourism projects, and the limitations to, and means of, facilitating the use of evaluation findings. These factors and their accommodation within utilization-focused evaluation are now considered.

Situational Responsiveness

Patton (1997) emphasises that evaluation is contextual and that each evaluation will differ dependent on the information needs of specific users, the level at which the evaluation is undertaken, the different perspectives of those stakeholders participating in the evaluation and the identity of the main stakeholders. He argues that where context and situation are not taken into account in evaluation design, findings are less liable to be used (Patton, 1997, 1999). In order to ensure that the evaluation process does not degenerate into a collection of useless information, it is imperative that the reasons for undertaking the evaluation are clearly defined and articulated. Problems are less likely to be encountered if 'the big pieces in evaluation' - its purpose; priorities; definitions; expected outcomes; and intended audience, users and uses of the results are clearly established as the first step of the evaluation process (Patton, 1999:8). One of the main challenges is to determine which questions need to be answered. This is dependent upon: 1) the stage of development of the evaluand (for example pre-implementation, management or operational phase); 2) the particular local circumstances (for example undeveloped rural area, rural area on an urban fringe) and; 3) the purpose of the evaluation (for example to acquire funding).

The context in which a project is evaluated will differ dependent upon its stage of development, location, size, type, stakeholders and ownership structure. The first

step of the evaluation process entails bringing together the stakeholders to establish the context in which the evaluation is to take place. Information critical to the selection of the questions to be asked is procured, benefits of evaluation and its potential contribution to the project are discussed and utilisation of the evaluation results is explored (Curnan et al, 1998; Patton, 1999). Only when these issues have been resolved are methods of data collection and expected results interrogated (Curnan et al, 1998; Patton, 1999; Taylor-Powell et al, 1996). Each evaluation, taking into account the particular aspects of the project and in consultation with the key stakeholders, is thus tailored to the needs of that project and the evaluation criteria selected accordingly (Rossi et al, 1999).

The index of suggested criteria, developed by respondents to this study, for use in the evaluation of rural tourism projects is not prescriptive. It is envisaged that the criteria relevant to a particular evaluation should be selected from this index in a similar manner to which the cloth for a suit, tailor-made for a client, is selected from the bolts of material on the shelf. There may be additional criteria, of specific interest to a particular project, that need to be included in the evaluation and which can be added to those selected from the index – special buttons for the suit that are not on the shelf. Utilization-focused evaluation accommodates selection and addition of criteria by stakeholders participating in the evaluation. Patton (1999:14) strongly argues that in order for stakeholders to buy into the concept of ‘reality testing’ it is imperative not to impose criteria. ‘Evaluators have to connect with people at the individual level of self-interest – think of how the evaluation will help them’.

Although there is acceptance that evaluation should be utilised in all stages of evaluation and development to facilitate effective decision-making, this is seldom the case (Curnan et al, 1998; Patton, 1999). Formative evaluation of a rural tourism project proposal (pre-implementation evaluation) can play a major role in providing documentation to support applications for funds to implement, continue, expand or replicate a project (Smith, 2001). Evaluation of projects during the operational or management stage could have diverse foci: 1) an ‘impact focus’ determines the impacts of a project on its host environment; 2) a ‘question focus’ provides

information that enhances project management and decision-making; 3) a 'knowledge focus' provides lessons that inform future projects and feedback to tourism policy-makers and planners; and 4) a 'process focus' reports on the day-to-day operation of a project, its strengths, weaknesses, the obstacles it encounters and ways of bringing about improvement (Patton, 1997:192). Patton (1997:192-194) suggests a vast 'menu' of foci that can be accommodated within a utilization-focused evaluation and from which selection of the specific foci to suit the specific needs of the users of evaluation findings can be made. It is noteworthy that utilization-focused evaluation is able to accommodate any of these foci either singly or in combination (Patton, 1999) to provide a more holistic picture of the evaluand. When projects close or fail, a summative evaluation would assess the merits of the failed/closed project, build an understanding of why it failed, and provide lessons for transfer to other projects and feedback to decision-makers at local, or any other, authority level (Patton, 1999). Utilisation-focused evaluation is thus both situationally responsive and accommodating of a diversity of foci in generating the information sought by the users of the evaluation findings.

Stakeholder Participation In The Evaluation Of Rural Tourism Projects

Because of the negative connotations inherent in evaluation, the relationships and utilisation of power and control between the evaluation participants is of crucial significance. Evaluation, which should aim to be a learning and capacity building tool, increasing the facility of stakeholders to improve project quality and enhance management decisions, is frequently looked upon as a means whereby those in authority achieve more control (United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Development agencies argue that participation builds capacity to think clearly and systematically, enhances planning focus, assists in developing management and prioritisation skills, builds commitment to action and provides motivation for participants to share their views and utilise what they have learnt in improving the evaluand (United Nations Development Programme, 1997; United States Agency for International Development, 1996). In accommodating stakeholder participation utilization-focused evaluation thus assists in building capacity and participants become owners of the evaluation process.

Identifying which stakeholders will participate in the evaluation of rural tourism projects is critically important. Patton (1997) posits that participation is dependent on commitment to the evaluation process and a valid interest in the utilization of its findings '...evaluation stakeholders are people who have a stake – a vested interest - in the evaluation findings' (Patton, 1997:41). Evaluation, devised to include the information needs of rural tourism stakeholders, must thus provide for potential participation by project managers, operators, partners, funders, staff, potential beneficiaries, Non Governmental Organisations, the public sector and other relevant users of the evaluation findings. Selecting stakeholders for inclusion in the evaluation process is, however, liable to be emotionally charged and conflict ridden and will require proactive negotiation between project operators and the public sector, or any other body, in whom responsibility for the implementation of evaluation is vested.

Stakeholder conflict, engendered by interests and ideas that are sharply divisive, complicates participatory evaluation. Development agencies (United Nations Development Programme, 1997; United States Agency for International Development, 1996) report that it is not uncommon that particular participants attempt to hijack proceedings in order to further their own agendas or that evaluation results are viewed as subjective since stakeholders with vested interests participate. It is not unlikely that a similar situation will prevail in the rural tourism arena. Utilization-focused evaluation deals with conflict by focusing on learning and improvement, by emphasising the long-term benefits of the knowledge gained and its use, and by creating an environment in which diverse perspectives and interests are valued. 'Dialogue, discussion and respect for differences enhance enlightenment' (Patton, 1997:357). Discord between stakeholders may however have implications for the use of evaluation findings.

Using Evaluation Findings

One of the challenges in facilitating the use of evaluation findings is the possibility that results may threaten entrenched interests and highlight controversial issues and

perspectives (Shadish et al, 1991). This factor is prevalent in tourism where academics (Butler, 1993; Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Nelson, 1993) have identified the plethora of roleplayers, each with their own agenda and conflicting opinions, as a major constraint in reaching accord on tourism related issues. The process of evaluation is seldom viewed in a positive light. Patton (1997:22) elucidates the connotations and meanings ascribed to evaluation and the negativity evoked by the concept. In testing the concept of evaluation with participants he received these descriptors: 'assess, measure, judge, attack, demean, fear, downsize and crap'. Participants in an evaluation must be convinced of the benefits the evaluation process and the accurate interpretation of the findings will offer them. Rural tourism project operators will not want to hear negative reports about their projects. They will need to be persuaded that 'more is learnt from failure than from success' (Patton, 1999:15) and that learning from mistakes identified through evaluation is a cognitive and capacity building process.

Kaplan (1989:1), a development practitioner, argues that 'if evaluation is understood, it will become less foreign, less threatening and therefore lead to effective utilisation'. He is adamant that, as opposed to an examination or investigation, evaluation is a building exercise in which past action is assessed, mistakes and successes identified and reflected on, and the findings used to bring about future improvement (Kaplan, 1989). Utilisation-focused evaluation is not about judgment. Conversely it promotes learning and improvement and the provision of information that provides direction for future decision-making and action (Patton, 1997). Utilization-focused evaluation promotes an understanding of evaluation as a learning tool thus assisting in facilitating the use of its findings.

Patton (1997, 1999) argues that the audience to whom, and the manner in which, evaluation results are presented are decisive in determining if findings are constructively utilised. He also claims that the utilisation of evaluation results is dependent upon how well the participants have been prepared from the inception of the evaluation planning process toward putting the findings to use. Development agencies argue that evaluation findings, based on empirical evidence, must be

presented in a factual, simple and easily interpreted format (Curnan et al, 1998; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Recommendations and proposals for action must be clear and focus on improving the project evaluated. Logical relationships between the findings, conclusions and recommendations must also be evident. Both positive and negative lessons learned from the evaluation, in particular those relating to best and worst practices, should form an important element of the report presented (United Nations Development Programme, 1997).

Simplicity and easy comprehensibility are imperative if recommendations and findings are to be effectively utilized by rural tourism operators. The language in which the findings are couched will play a significant role in determining whether future evaluation is supported or rejected. Utilization-focused evaluation accommodates a variety of reporting styles. Selection of the most appropriate follows the tenet of utilization-focused evaluation 'the style, format, content and process of reporting should all be geared toward intended use by intended users' (Patton, 1997:331). The application of utilization-focused evaluation to rural tourism projects is now examined.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation of Rural Tourism Projects

A primary constraint to be considered is financing the evaluation of rural tourism projects, which may incur substantial costs. Nelson (1993) argues that in view of the small scale of many tourism projects an inexpensive means of evaluation must be found. Findings from this study have indicated that, in general, local authorities are perceived as the entity with which responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects lies. However, for a local authority to employ an external evaluator will entail significant cost. Consideration must therefore be given to mechanisms whereby utilization-focused evaluation can be cost-effectively employed. From a pragmatic perspective, this means that evaluation capacity must be built internally; both within the department/institution responsible for its implementation and in the greater rural tourism sector. Patton (1997) contends that participation in evaluation avails participants of the opportunity to understand the logic in evaluation thinking and builds capacity to identify problems, select criteria and collect, analyse and

interpret data. It can also assist in 'building a culture of learning in a programme or organization...(this) will mean building into the evaluation attention to and training in evaluation logic and skills' (Patton, 1997:100).

Patton (1997) also asserts that a utilization-focused evaluator will view the evaluation process as an opportunity through which participating stakeholders can be taught to interpret evaluation findings. Individual participants make their own interpretations, which are explored with the aim of reaching consensus as to the 'most reasonable and useful interpretations supported by the data' (Patton, 1997:316). Where consensus cannot be reached the implications of the divergent interpretations are further explored. Other evaluators also recognise evaluation's capacity building properties. The concern of Fetterman's (2001) empowerment evaluation for participation, relevance, improvement and capacity building largely overlap those of utilization-focused evaluation. Fetterman (1991:13) alleges that the evaluation process is 'empowering if it helps people develop skills so that they can become independent problem solvers and decision makers'. Kaplan (1989:3) asserts that 'the process of evaluation is itself as much a learning experience as the conclusions and recommendations in which it results'. It can then be argued that participation and training in the evaluation process can build the capacity of stakeholders to conduct their own utilization-focused evaluations, increasing the cost effectiveness of the undertaking. King (1995), who agrees that participant skills in evaluation can be built to the extent that an external evaluator becomes superfluous, underscores this argument.

The final section of this chapter presents an overview of some studies undertaken in identifying issues against which to monitor or evaluate various facets of tourism. Some authors refer to these measures as criteria (for example Mill and Morrison, 1992); others refer to indicators (for example Miller, 2001; Nelson, 1993). Faulkner (1997) on the other hand utilizes the concept of targets and performance indicators in his framework for the evaluation of National Tourism Administration destination marketing programmes. Although criterion is the operational term adopted for this study, where other researchers' work refers to indicators this term is used.

Previous Studies

The most comprehensive collection of academic papers relating to monitoring and evaluation for the planning and management of tourism is that edited by Nelson et al (1993). Whilst many of the papers incorporate suggested indicators against which to monitor and evaluate with few exceptions there is, however, no clear intimation of how these were derived. One such exception is a study in Indonesia (Harris and Nelson, 1993:196) that bases its findings on the 'whole economy' model, encompassing both formal and informal economic activities, and uses the ABC (Abiotic, Biotic and Cultural) Resource Survey method of data collection (Harris and Nelson, 1993:182). Like the Delphi Technique, the ABC Resource Survey is iterative. In the first round of data collection researchers selected the type of data sought by reference to the literature and consultation with key informants (Harris and Nelson, 1993). Data, collected in two field sessions, was captured on theme maps and supplemented by background literature and interviews with academics, decision-makers, residents and tourists. At the second iteration data pertaining to issues significant to and those constraining sustainable development were collected and mapped. The authors posit that the ABC method provided a useful basis for identifying and providing insight into the economic, societal and environmental impacts of tourism on the local community (Harris and Nelson, 1993). Eight very broad areas, each encompassing more than one indicator, are suggested in which the impacts of tourism should be evaluated. In reading Harris and Nelson's (1993) paper this study has developed only a very superficial understanding of the method adopted but argues that whilst this method is appropriate for indicator development in a specific, demarcated area it is inappropriate where respondents are spread over vast geographical distances or where generic indicators covering a broad geographic area are called for.

Miller (2001) used the Delphi Technique as his primary data collection method in developing indicators for the promotion of sustainable tourism. Statements included in the first round Delphi Survey were selected by filtering indicators previously developed by organisations (The United Nations and World Tourism Organisation)

together with those of academic authors (for example Harris and Nelson, 1993). Miller acknowledges the subjectivity of this process. The Delphi expert panel was selected from academics that had published in four major tourism journals. The second phase of Miller's research comprised interviews with members of the tourism industry to elicit comments about the indicators developed. This was followed by self-administered questionnaires designed to test consumers' willingness to use these indicators. Miller's study, undertaken with the purpose of evaluating the progress made by individual resorts towards more sustainable practices, produced a final list of sixteen indicators 'that can be used by consumers in the purchase of their holidays to promote greater sustainable tourism' (Miller, 2001:233).

This study differs from that of Miller (2001) in that it was considered imperative that the initial input into the index of criteria developed by this study should come from a diverse cross-section of respondents as opposed to being confined to academics. This decision is substantiated in Chapter Four. The most fundamental difference between this study and those of both Harris and Nelson (1993) and Miller (2001) is, however, that this study considers the process of implementation, which they do not. For example, an indicator in Miller's (2001) list reads 'annual energy consumption by local residents: annual energy consumption by the tourism resort'. This study questions firstly how this information would be presented to consumers, secondly where it would be presented if these indicators were designed to influence consumer booking patterns and thirdly who would monitor whether or not it was making a difference? Miller (2001) argues that there is no point in considering implementation if the indicators developed are not acceptable to consumers. This study in turn argues that developing either criteria or indicators is pointless unless consideration is made of their implementation. The tourism industry is engulfed in Codes of Conduct and Responsible Tourism Guidelines that are meaningless placebos with minimal implementation (Wheeller, 1994). This study considers that the lack of attention afforded to issues of implementation is a cardinal shortcoming in the majority of studies pertaining to monitoring and evaluation in tourism, rendering indicators or criteria that are developed correspondingly ineffective and meaningless.

House and Howe (1999:17) posit that the criteria to be used in an evaluation 'must be derived substantially from the nature of the product itself and from the function the product is designed to serve'. Scriven (1980) argues decisively that to develop criteria for an evaluation the evaluand must be understood:

Once one understands the nature of the evaluand...one will often understand rather fully what it takes to be a better and a worse instance of that type of evaluand. Understanding what a watch is leads automatically to understanding what the dimensions of merit for one are (Scriven, 1980:90).

Expertise in the evaluand (in this instance rural tourism) is thus necessary to develop meaningful evaluation criteria. Applying these arguments to the development of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects substantiates the use, by this study, of experts in developing the index of criteria required to fulfil a primary objective of this study.

Concluding Points

This chapter critically analysed the nature, theory and practice of evaluation as propounded by leading evaluation scholars. The diverse evaluation approaches of theorists, broadly based on categories of knowledge construction, the values in evaluation, evaluation practice and the use of evaluation findings, have been examined. From this analysis it has clearly emerged that utilization-focused evaluation is most appropriate for application to rural tourism projects.

The properties of utilization-focused evaluation - making judgements, improving the evaluand's effectiveness, informing decisions about future evaluands and providing information for the specific use of specific users - make it a suitable agent of information and catalyst of improvement to the rural tourism sector. Other facets of utilization-focused evaluation, which render its deployment apposite to the rural tourism sector include: 1) the selection of criteria and the methods utilised in the collection of data for the evaluation are based on the context of the project to be evaluated; 2) utilization-focused evaluation promotes the involvement, and the building of capacity, of relevant stakeholders within the evaluation process;

3) the limitations to use of the evaluation findings may be overcome by recognising and negotiating stakeholder fears and conflicts; and 4) the generation of information pertinent to the users of the evaluation findings is a central tenet of the approach. It is these facets of utilization-focused evaluation, which make it the preferred option for application in rural tourism projects. Evaluation is not a methodological exercise undertaken in order to furnish a report, but rather a means through which to develop, improve or progress the evaluand (Patton, 1999). As such its usefulness in the rural tourism sector is inestimable.

The following chapter sets out the methodology adopted in carrying out this study. In keeping with the ethos of participation promoted by utilization-focused evaluation, the methods utilised in gaining an understanding of and suggesting a mechanism for the evaluation of rural tourism projects in Britain and South Africa have given voice to respondent perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter commences with a review of the paradigm debate in evaluation research. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the Delphi Technique and a justification of its selection as the primary data collection method utilised in this study. The selection of the Delphi expert panel is justified and the administration of the Delphi Survey explicated. The chapter continues with a discussion of the secondary data collection methods employed and gives an overview of respondent samples, the administrative process and the analysis of the data collected. The chapter also reflects upon the limitations of the research and the problems encountered.

Evaluation Research in Context

Evaluation research is well developed in disciplines such as education (Shadish et al, 1991). Its development and utilisation in the field of tourism is, however, less common, a concern documented by numerous researchers (Hall, 2000; Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Nelson et al, 1993). Influenced for many years by the quantitative approach, which sought to generate generalizable findings and establish causal relationships (Taylor-Powell et al, 1996), evaluation research has undergone fundamental changes over the last three decades. During this period numerous researchers have argued for a new approach that emphasises 'description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction' (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976:144). Other researchers, such as Patton (1990:12), underscore this approach arguing that the:

Purpose of basic academic research is to generate theory and discover truth, that is, knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The purpose of applied research and evaluation is to inform action, enhance decision-making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems.

It is within the context of evaluation research as the originator of information, through which the potential to empower rural tourism stakeholders to take more informed decisions and enhance their understanding of the rural tourism sector is realised, that this study is set.

Evaluation Research and the Paradigm Debate

Over an ongoing period of thirty years academics have vigorously debated the respective merits of the positivist as opposed to the interpretive approaches to research (Punch, 1998). The positivist paradigm, generally associated with quantitative methods of data collection, adopts an objective, outsider-centred natural science approach, which seeks to determine 'cause-effect relationships' (Punch, 1998:51). Traditionally, quantitative studies are believed to lend themselves to replication and data collected by quantitative methods is perceived to be more scientifically rigorous and to yield objective, more accurate information (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997). Conclusions reached are based on statistical analysis of data and numerical evidence (Veal, 1997).

On the other hand, the interpretive paradigm, characterized by qualitative methods of data collection, adopts a more insider-centred, subjective approach (Punch, 1998). Qualitative research is not concerned with numbers but conversely emphasises the capture of information punctuating depth, an enriched collection of data and a more profound understanding of the phenomenon studied (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As opposed to the objective approach of the quantitative researcher, qualitative researchers accept that no research is either value or bias free. The researcher, who functions as the instrument of data collection, is thus called upon to incorporate a description both of their role in the research process and to identify their own biases and ideology (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Conventionally perceived as mutually exclusive, researchers are increasingly abandoning their polarised stances and acknowledging that both quantitative and qualitative methods have strengths and weaknesses and that each complements the other (Veal, 1997). Progressively more researchers (Creswell, 1994; Greene et al,

1989; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994) are postulating that it is possible to combine the two approaches in their research. The primary benefit is that 'we can often increase the scope, depth and power of research by combining the two approaches' (Punch, 1998:243). Other researchers (for example Morgan, 1998; Wilson, 2002) endorse a sequential approach to combining methods. Morgan (1998), for example, advocates that where the research would benefit from multiple, complementary research methods, the researcher should first decide upon either qualitative or quantitative research as the principal method and then select a complementary method, adding to the research's facility to achieve its objectives.

The qualitative/quantitative debate has raged no less furiously amongst evaluators than in any other field of the research community. The traditional school of evaluation (primarily stage one evaluators) favours a positivist approach and the use of quantitative, objective methods of evaluation, in which standardised procedures are paramount (Rowlands, 1991; Rubin, 1995). The focus of this approach, which utilises external evaluators in order to increase objectivity, is on measurable quantitative methods based on pre-specified criteria. Since little input is afforded to stakeholders, the approach has the proclivity of creating negative reactions amongst those affected by the evaluation outcome (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Rowlands, 1991).

The alternative approach to evaluation conversely promotes the use of qualitative, subjective methods of data collection in the form of fieldwork, for example interviews and focus groups, in which dialogue, description and interpretation take precedence over measurement (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Rowlands, 1991). Negotiation and consensus form part of the evaluation process, which may be undertaken internally, by stakeholders in the project, with the evaluator taking on the role of a facilitator (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Rowlands, 1991). Whilst objectivity can be argued in traditional approaches to evaluation, the alternative approach acknowledges and seeks subjectivity, encouraging input from a diversity of stakeholders (Rowlands, 1991; Rubin, 1995). It is argued that the move toward the alternative approach has transformed evaluation from 'monolithic to pluralistic

conceptions, to multiple methods, multiple measures, multiple criteria, multiple perspectives, multiple audiences and even multiple interests' (House, 1993:3).

Traditional evaluation researchers, who view objectivity as the scientific way of doing things, argue that evaluations, which use both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, are lower in quality than those using only quantitative research methods (Bernstein and Freeman, 1975). In their view findings from qualitative data collection are questionable since they allege that subjectivity implies 'opinion rather than fact, intuition rather than logic and impression rather than rigour' (Patton 1997:280). Other researchers contest the preconceived notions of objectivity and subjectivity. Petrie (1972:48), for example, argues that two scientists, conditioned by their own theoretically held perspectives, on examining the same phenomenon may 'literally not see the same thing'.

Proponents of the alternative approach to evaluation, who adopt a more practical stance, aver that there is no single blueprint that can claim to be the best design by which to conduct an evaluation and that the research methodology must be suited to the particular characteristics of the situation and the requirements posed by the evaluation problem (Cronbach, 1982a; Shapiro, 1973). Other researchers (Taylor-Powell et al, 1996) aver that consideration must be afforded to which methods are most likely to secure the type of information needed, taking into account the values, level of understanding and capabilities of those from whom information is requested. Shadish et al (1991) point out that there is no research method that is appropriate at all times and in all circumstances, and posit that using only one method can lead to the collection of less useful data or the reporting of less accurate findings. They go so far as to describe it as 'folly to prescribe one method for all evaluations' and argue for a combination of approaches in order to build on their complementary strengths (Shadish et al, 1991:44).

The debate with regard to both the research approach adopted and the methods utilised in evaluation studies is ongoing and has elicited copious literature (Cook, 1995; Donmoyer, 1996; Eisner, 1991; House, 1991; Moss, 1996; Patton, 1990;

Phillips, 1995; Smith, 1988). A growing consensus has nonetheless emerged amongst many evaluators that both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods contribute to all aspects of evaluative enquiries and can successfully be used together (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003; Cook, 1995; Patton, 1982a; Sechrest, 1992). Other researchers argue that whilst both qualitative and quantitative methods have strengths and limitations, both serve a purpose and that the emergent trend is toward combining aspects of each (Carvalho and Whyte, 1997; Greene et al, 1989; Shadish, 1993; Yin, 1994). Evaluation researchers thus increasingly collect data from multiple sources and perspectives, using a variety of data collection methods designed toward ensuring a more complete representation of the problem under interrogation (Curnan et al, 1998; Taylor-Powell, 1996). Methodologically, evaluation has progressed from an emphasis on quantitative methods seeking numerical evidence, to 'a more permissive atmosphere' in which qualitative research methods, such as observation, interviews and focus groups, have gained acceptability (House, 1993:3). Cook (1995) concurs that qualitative researchers have now gained acceptance in the qualitative-quantitative evaluation debate.

Despite increasing acknowledgment by researchers of the value of combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches in their studies, Echtner and Jamal (1997) assert that tourism researchers customarily approach their research from the main discipline in which they have been trained, rather than using holistic approaches to determine a universal spread of knowledge and attitude. Patton (1999) argues that an important consideration when making methodological choices is the ease with which the data emanating from the evaluation research can be understood. Other considerations include the financial resources available, the cultural perspectives of participants in the evaluation and the credibility of the results emanating from the methods selected (Curnan et al, 1998). Both evaluation theorists and practitioners however repeatedly emphasise that the intrinsic worth of the evaluation process lies in its being utilisation focused (Curnan et al, 1998; Patton, 1999; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). The research techniques adopted by this study are now examined.

Research Design Adopted

The research was divided into two phases: 1) a Delphi Survey and 2) a focus group held in South Africa and eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted in South Africa and Britain. In consideration of the complexities of the rural tourism sector a combined approach, utilising both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, was adopted by the study with view to minimising the weakness of any single technique in procuring the data required. The approach was further substantiated by the need to understand both what is considered of importance in the evaluation of rural tourism projects and why this should be so. Quantitative research, which yielded information on which questions required further in-depth probing, was sequentially followed by a qualitative investigation. The study, distinguished by an emphasis on the practical application of the research findings, was thus designed to utilise a Delphi Survey, supplemented by a focus group and semi-structured interviews as the chosen methods of data collection. The utilisation of these complementary research methods facilitated the accommodation of disparate opinions, solicited from a diverse range of actors within the rural tourism domain.

The Delphi Technique

The aim of the initial stage of the research, during which the Delphi Technique was used, was to identify those issues considered by research respondents to be important for inclusion in an index of criteria for utilisation in the evaluation of individual rural tourism projects. Linstone and Turoff (1975:3) characterize the Delphi Technique as 'a method for structuring a group communication process, so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem'. Establishing criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects, which are encapsulated in a complex political and social environment and characterized by diverse stakeholders each with their own overriding interests and agendas, epitomizes such a problem. Under these circumstances researchers may be confronted with a situation in which research respondents have conflicting views on issues under investigation. The Delphi Technique provides an enabling mechanism whereby conflicting opinion and hostile attitudes can be incorporated and dealt with, without the 'prima donna behaviours that may vitiate roundtable discussions'

(Rosenthal, 1976:122). Although its application is thus recommended in evaluation studies where conflicts between stakeholders are a disruptive influence, Patton (1997) cautions that the lack of face-to-face contact may constitute both strength and weakness. Whilst on the one hand the Delphi Technique obviates conflict, on the other hand it equally fails to deal either with issues of power between stakeholders or their divergent interests.

Originally developed as a forecasting tool through which to solicit opinion from a group of experts (Rosenthal, 1976), it is alleged that the Delphi Technique is increasingly gaining recognition as a means of consensus building in a variety of tourism related fields (Archer, 1994; Lankford and Howard, 1994; Seddighi et al, 1999). The Delphi Technique has been utilized in numerous tourism studies including: Kaynak and Macaulay (1984) in the measurement of tourism market potential in Nova Scotia; Yong et al (1989) in a study of future factors affecting tourism in Singapore; Green and Hunter (1992) as a means of assessing environmental impacts in tourism development; Korca (1992) in a study relating to environmental impact assessments of tourism projects; Seddighi et al (1999) in a study of the dimensions of political instability in the tourism industry in Cyprus; Kearsley et al (1999) in research undertaken to determine the New Zealand tourism industry's attitudes towards and understanding of sustainable tourism; Tideswell, Mules and Faulkner (2001) in a study designed to forecast tourism demand in South Australia; and Mayaka and King, (2002) in a study relating to a quality assessment of education and training for Kenya's tour operating sector. Miller (2001:239) who utilized the Delphi Technique in his PhD thesis pertaining to the development of indicators for the promotion of sustainable tourism argues that:

The Delphi Technique has been shown throughout this research to be an excellent tool for the acquisition of information from a geographically dispersed group of experts. The technique provided the opportunity to seek opinions of experts on the opinions of other experts and so, strengthen the validity of the end findings.

This thesis has similarly found the Delphi Technique to be a valuable method of collecting data from respondents located on two continents.

Rationale and Justification for the use of the Delphi Technique

Researchers (Johnson and King, 1988; Kaynak and Macauley, 1984) argue that the collective judgment of a group of experts is better than that of one expert alone. Others (Green and Hunter, 1992; Ziglio, 1996) affirm the cognitive value of the Delphi Technique as an effective process of collecting expert opinion and extracting knowledge from a group of people with expertise in the field of study. This research utilises the Delphi process as a means of effectively structuring group communication and allowing the panel, comprised of sixty individual experts, to deal collectively as a unit with the research enquiry thus facilitating the formation of a group judgment.

Interest in the Delphi Technique was awakened, and investigation into the possibilities of its use in this study stimulated, by participating as a member of the panel of experts in a Delphi survey pertaining to sustainable nature-based tourism in trans-frontier conservation areas in Southern Africa (Spenceley, 2000). Disagreements pertaining to which criteria to apply underlie a significant proportion of evaluation related conflict, yet good evaluation is dependent on relevant criteria (Patton, 1999; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). The rationale for the utilisation of the Delphi Technique in this study was thus based on the need to effectively engage with a range of rural tourism experts, spread over significant geographical distances. This engagement was necessary to elicit input and to the extent possible gain consensus as to the issues to be included in the proposed index of evaluation criteria for application in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Since the technique involved non-interactive groups, it removed the need for the time and travel required to bring the experts together in a group discussion. It thus became possible to draw upon the expertise of respondents based at geographic distances as considerable as those between South Africa and Britain in an inexpensive manner.

Harrison (1995) argues that intrinsic to the concept of quality group decision-making is the ability to attain key objectives and the ease with which the results can be implemented. Whilst original, creative, independent thinking is an important criterion; decisions should nonetheless be acceptable to most people whom they will

affect. The nature of the Delphi Technique subscribed to these tenets, permitting the sharing of information and reasoning between a group of experts from the rural tourism sector and allowing for a diversity of respondent judgment and opinion to be incorporated into the process of attaining the research objectives. The issue of how evaluation would be implemented in relation to rural tourism projects emerged as a source of concern amongst Delphi panelists. This resulted in further in-depth probing of this issue in the second stage of the research, which followed the Delphi survey.

Strengths And Weaknesses Of The Delphi Technique

All research methods have strengths and limitations and, as Shadish et al (1991:44) argue, none is consistently 'feasible and unbiased so no study is ever free of flaws'. Like other research methods the Delphi Technique has both its adherents and its critics. Archer (1980:5) states that 'although this (the Delphi) approach gives expertise and reason an opportunity to triumph over rhetoric and emotion, it does contain a number of weaknesses and limitations'. Sackman (1974) has extensively criticized the Delphi Technique contending that it is unscientific. Woudenberg (1991) points out that it is difficult to assess the accuracy and reliability of a method that has judgement and opinion as its basis. Other researchers (Mowforth and Munt, 1998) argue that the subjectivity of the technique infers that it is possible to obtain different results from different groups of experts, or even from the same group of experts at a different time. Lang (1995:2), however, counter argues that:

This collective judgment of experts, although made up of subjective opinions, is considered to be more reliable than individual statements and is thus more objective in its outcomes.

Proponents of the Delphi Technique cite the fact that it provides a means whereby interaction between experts, who cannot come together physically but whose involvement may increase the credibility of the information gathered, can be inexpensively facilitated (Linstone and Turoff, 1975). Equally it is asserted (Green and Hunter, 1992; Targett, 1996; Thierauf, 1989) that the anonymity of individual response, whilst removing the effects of prejudice, peer pressure and the desire to conform, enhances the candour of respondents while simultaneously exposing agreements and disagreements. Furthermore, it is argued that an advantage of the

Delphi Technique lies in its ability to allow for the consideration of both qualitative and quantitative variables, simultaneously 'providing a framework for consultation' (Faulkner and Valerio, 1995:168).

Taylor and Judd (1994:536) argue that 'without question the most important step in the Delphi Method is the selection of panel members'. Bijl (1992) confirms this argument asserting that a prudently selected expert panel not only increases the quality of the data collected but also the credibility of the study's findings. Some researchers (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Weaver, 1972; Wheeler et al, 1990) are, however, critical of the methods adopted in selecting the panel of experts and the evaluation of their level of expertise. Harrison (1995:249) agrees that the process of selecting the expert panel is often not considered seriously enough since it is their calibre, which determines the quality of the Delphi survey. What is clear from these arguments is that selection of the Delphi panel should be based both on expertise and on ensuring the inclusion of panellists drawn from diverse fields of experience in the area under investigation (Massey and Foley, 1987; Rowe et al, 1991).

Proponents of the Delphi Technique argue that the direct control wielded by the researcher over the study is amongst its benefits (Amara, 1975). Detractors of the technique, on the other hand, are critical of the level of researcher influence and the potential for bias in the selection of the panellists, the design of the questionnaires, the interpretation of responses and the processing of results (Pan et al, 1995; Salanick et al, 1971). Caution is also sounded that the anonymity of participants does not rule out dominance of the group by particular respondents or the possibility of researchers giving undue credence to the opinion of particular experts (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Pan et al, 1995). This study recognises the limitations of the Delphi Technique. Findings of the Delphi Survey were thus verified by the use of qualitative data collection methods in the second phase of the research.

Selection Of The Delphi Expert Panel

Wilson (2002) points out that in order for researchers to produce reasonably defensible findings, their sampling procedure must be repeatable and transparent. Utilisation of the Delphi Technique called for the careful, deliberate selection of prospective panellists in order to increase the likelihood that the variances of opinion and expertise in the rural tourism field would be represented in the data collected (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Patton, 1990; Sekaran, 1992; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). For the purposes of this study it was essential to identify prospective panellists drawn from a variety of tourism related fields in both South Africa and Britain. Participation was solicited from academics, consultants in the field of tourism, public sector officials representing the various tiers of government and their agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), rural tourism project managers and private sector tourism operators in order to draw upon a cross-section of expertise within the subject area. The research would have been simplified by the selection of panellists from only one country. However, it was considered important to determine whether the issues identified and the criteria developed by South African panellists were unique to rural tourism projects in a less-developed country, or whether similar issues prevailed in a developed country, such as Britain. The selection of panellists from two countries also ensured further diversification of the expert panel. This allowed for the comparison of opinion, differences and issues considered of consequence to rural tourism projects between experts geographically located in countries between which the stage of development of the rural tourism sector differs substantially.

Andranovich (1995) emphasises that in order to secure meaningful participation in a Delphi survey, the study problem and the questions posed by the survey must match the interests of the panellists. Researchers (Kaynak, Bloom and Leibold, 1994) add that in addition to sharing a common interest, panellists should represent different points of view pertaining to that interest and should be selected for their knowledge of the subject under investigation. Solution of the problem should also be of benefit to them. What is of consequence is the fact that the quality of the results of the Delphi survey is highly dependent on the relevant knowledge, skill or level of

information of the panellists used and their willingness to be involved over a substantial period of time (Delbecq et al, 1975).

Researchers who employ the Delphi Technique are at variance concerning the requisite size of the respondent panel. Some researchers (Delbecq et al, 1975) contend that ten to fifteen respondents suffice where the panel comprises a homogenous group. Others (Yong et al, 1989) assert that a minimum of fifteen to twenty participants is necessary. Green and Hunter (1992), who used 40 panel members in their study, considered this number adequate to obtain sufficiently balanced and wide-ranging opinion and to compensate for any panellist attrition that occurred during the study. Miller's (2001) initial panel, on the other hand, comprised seventy-four individuals. For the purposes of this study the decision was taken to draw upon 60 panellists in order to ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of expertise drawn from academia, the public sector, the consultative and the operational fields of rural tourism and to allow for potential drop-out.

One of the most notable limitations of the Delphi technique is the rate of panellist attrition experienced as the survey progresses (Mayaka and King, 2002; Moeller and Shafer, 1994; Pan et al, 1995). Factors contributing to this attrition include the level of commitment in time required from panellists (Andranovich, 1995; Moeller and Shafer, 1994) and the difficulty of maintaining high panellist motivation in view of the 'lack of stimulation from face-to-face contact' (Gamon, 1991:1). A member of the Delphi panel in this study recognised this limitation 'one thing about the Delphi was that, working in isolation, I missed the face to-face debate and the discussion in which a point takes on its own life and grows'. Andronovich (1995), however, argues that the degree to which panellists are themselves interested in the topic of the research is of particular significance in minimising frustration and loss of interest prior to completion of the time consuming process.

Panellist attrition can have considerable implications for a study. For example, Mayaka and King (2002) confined their questionnaire to a single round due to a paucity of comprehensive and usable responses and to the unwillingness of panellists to participate in subsequent rounds. In Green and Hunter's (1992) study panellist drop-out rate was 48 percent. Pan et al (1995) report that in three test cases of their

mini-Delphi studies response to the second round was disappointing, but all the same provided new ideas, comments and comparison of opinions. Based on their experience Pan et al (1996:32) advocate that 'the sample size should be as large as possible to allow for subsequent drop-outs, yet small enough to ensure the respondents are all experts in their fields'.

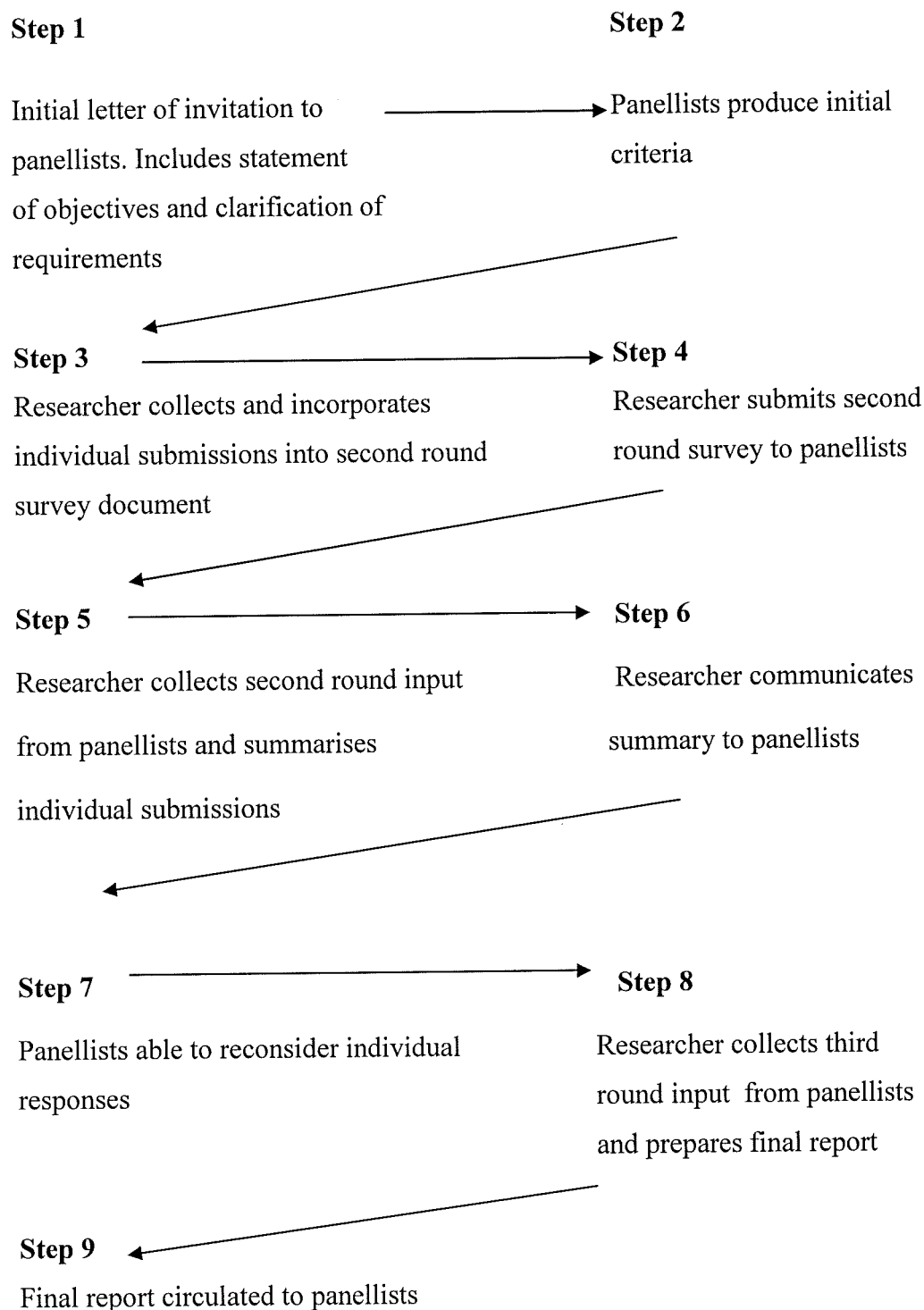
Identification of South Africans panellists was relatively simple. The researcher had been active in tourism in South Africa over a period of 20 years. During the seven years prior to embarking on the research she served as founding managing director of the Tourism Education and Training Authority of South Africa and subsequently as the founding chief executive officer of a provincial tourism board. In addition she was a member of numerous tourism boards and committees, including the national ministerial technical advisory committee on tourism. As a result the principal tourism roleplayers in South Africa were well known to her, a factor that facilitated access to different fields of expertise within the rural tourism sector. The subjectivity in the selection of panellists is acknowledged. Wheeler et al (1990) however recognize that the judgment of the researcher must play a role in soliciting the participation of a diverse group of experts in order to ensure the requisite balance in the composition of the panel. In Britain, potential participants were identified from perusal of academic literature, membership lists of well-recognised tourism organisations such as the Tourism Society, public sector websites, for example tourism officers at County and Local Councils, and recommendations solicited from tourism academics. A profile of research respondents is included as Appendix 8.

Sekaran (1992:237) argues that although judgment sampling diminishes the potential of generalising the research findings, it is 'sometimes the only meaningful way to investigate'. He advocates judgment sampling where select experts are required to provide the information sought. Capitalising on the knowledge and experience of a group, representing a cross section of expertise within the rural tourism arena, assisted in providing a broad perspective of rural tourism issues as opposed to an isolated point of view. Total inclusivity was nonetheless prohibited both by the size of the sample and the level of expertise and tourism insight sought from participants. The inclusion of tourism practitioners (operators and consultants) was considered

particularly relevant since issues raised by academics are prone to have a theoretical bias, which may disregard factors of a more practical orientation. This assumption is substantiated by Jenkins (1999) and Cooper (2002) who articulate the differing approaches to research and the poor communication that exists between the academic and practitioner tourism sectors.

ADMINISTERING THE DELPHI STUDY

The Delphi Technique is a means of securing and combining expert convergent opinion solicited by the use of successive surveys and feedback during which the anonymity of panellists is preserved (Moeller and Shafer, 1994; Tideswell, Mules and Faulkner, 2001). Each round of the Delphi survey is designed by means of focused questionnaires to elicit carefully considered group opinions, which can influence informed decision-making once the process is completed (Lang, 1995). It further enables panellists with differing points of view and cognitive skills to contribute to those sections of the research topic in which they have particular knowledge and understanding. The process, controlled by the researcher, permits panellists, by means of iteration and feedback of the average responses of the panel over a number of rounds, to compare their opinions and comments with those of other panellists. Where considered appropriate panellists may anonymously change their own responses in view of group opinion (Pan et al, 1995). Panellists are thus informed of current consensus but not harassed by disagreements (Raine, 1992; Thierauf, 1989). Figure 4.1 provides a schematic representation of the Delphi process adopted for this study.

**Fig. 4.1**

A schematic representation of the Delphi process adopted for this study. (Adapted from Raine, 1992:365).

Preliminary (Scoping) Round

The preliminary (scoping) round of the survey took the form of a letter (Appendix 1) dispatched by email, in October 2001, to 115 prospective participants representing the tourism academic, public, consultant and operational sectors drawn in equal numbers from Britain and South Africa. The letter elucidated the objective of the study, solicited participation by the recipient and requested prospective panellists to engage in individual brainstorming (Dunham, 1998) in order to generate twenty-five factors considered, from the specific viewpoint of the expert, imperative for inclusion as criteria in an evaluation framework for application in rural tourism projects. Ideas generated were to be briefly expressed with no attempt made to justify or evaluate the issues raised. Anonymity was guaranteed.

Positive response was received from 50 percent of the British and 54 percent of the South African prospects approached. Recognition, afforded by the inference that the success of the study was dependent on their expert, informed opinion, was used to provide motivation and induce the interest of leading roleplayers in participation in the Delphi survey (Wicklein, 1993). One respondent professed to be 'honoured that you regard my opinion highly enough to be one of your respondents, as I'm sure you have plenty of knowledgeable people to pick from'. Concern that insufficient usable factors would be generated by panellists for inclusion as potential criteria in the second round of the survey led the researcher to decide on twenty-five as an optimal number. However, despite the fact that not all panellists submitted twenty-five factors, 1721 potential criteria were submitted in this round of the survey. Based on this experience the number of factors requested from panellists in any future Delphi study would be restricted to a smaller number.

Researchers who posit that the initial issues to be included in a Delphi survey are better identified by a thorough literature search than by input from panellists are critical of this approach (Green et al, 1990; Wheeler et al, 1990). In their study Mayaka and King (2002) found that panellists, despite the fact that they were tourism industry experts, had little knowledge and experience of the topic under investigation and were thus unable to generate the requisite input. The original intention had been

to follow the pattern of the Delphi survey (Spenceley, 2000), in which the researcher had participated as a member of the panel, whereby factors raised by panellists were synthesised with issues identified from literature in compiling the second round questionnaire. The sheer volume and diversity of data initiated by the scoping round of the Delphi survey in this study, however, led to the decision to include only those factors identified by Delphi panellists. In discussing the index of evaluation criteria developed by respondents to this study comparison is made with issues arising from the literature. The decision to adopt this approach in identifying issues for inclusion in the Delphi Survey was based on two underlying principles. Firstly, the expert panellists conventionally identify the factors for inclusion in the second round of the Delphi survey (Dunham, 1998; Lang, 1995). Secondly, it was considered imperative that the issues incorporated in the survey should be those considered of consequence by panellists with a diverse range of tourism expertise. The importance of including issues of a practical orientation, as opposed to only those of a more theoretical nature emanating from the literature, were thus an additional consideration in pursuing this approach.

The expert panel comprised 31 South African and 29 British respondents. A limitation of the study was the lack of success in procuring participation from the public sector at national level. Although participation was solicited at this echelon in both countries, the approach proved futile and was met with evasions such as 'I am too busy to commit time to putting pen to paper but am quite happy to be interviewed'. Similar reluctance of South African National Government officials to commit themselves to written participation in a study was experienced during prior research (Briedenhann, 2000). In Britain response at national level was equally negative. 'It is not appropriate for officials to give their personal opinions on matters such as these' was stated as the reason for non-participation. Attempts to secure a balanced participation in terms of gender representation were similarly frustrated. Seventeen prospective panellists who declined the original request for participation were female, resulting in a female participation of only 20 percent. This is, however, indicative of the gender segmentation within the tourism sector with male predominance of high profile positions (Levy and Lerch, 1991). A genuine effort was made to elicit a non-racial divide in South African participation. This was not forthcoming with requests for participation either declined or ignored by twelve

potential panellists drawn from non-white groups, leading to a representation of only 19.35 percent on the final panel of 31 South African participants. Similar difficulties were also experienced in previous research (Briedenhann, 2000).

Reflection on the Scoping Round of the Delphi Survey

Reflection on the scoping round of the Delphi survey raised several pertinent issues. Firstly, the amount of time allocated for implementation was significantly underestimated. A full three months elapsed from the time the original emails were dispatched to the time the requisite sixty responses were received. Secondly, the process of analysis, which commenced in January 2002, was manually conducted and proved to be slow, laborious and reiterative taking place over ten rounds of consolidation, clustering and identification of patterns. This enabled coding of the potential criteria and removal of duplications. Clusters, into which potential criteria were sorted, were based on primary themes identified in the literature. These included the public sector; public participation; socio-cultural, economic, and environmental concerns; and infrastructural, marketing, visitor satisfaction and project planning issues. The sorting of the potential criteria proved problematic since many overlapped into more than one cluster (for example 'the project should have a strategy to avoid long-term dependency on external funding', which overlapped both the economic and project planning clusters). The researcher was thus compelled to take subjective decisions as to the cluster in which criteria were placed based on what, in her judgment, was most appropriate.

Thirdly, difficulties were encountered in condensing some of the input received which, in place of concise statements, took the form of long essay-like diatribes on issues considered by the respondent to be of substantial importance. The subjectivity in the interpretation of what should be extracted from such responses and included in the second round of the survey is acknowledged. Masini (1993) makes the point that a Delphi study is prey to the values and biases of the researcher who selects the panellists, interprets the factors submitted by panellists in the scoping round and compiles the second round questionnaire. Throughout the research process the possibility of researcher bias was a prime concern. Twenty years experience in both the public and private tourism sectors, which included responsibility over a period of six years for the development, marketing and management of tourism in a

predominantly rural South African province, had led as a natural consequence to the researcher having definitive ideas of what were considered the primary issues. In particular the facilitation of opportunity for inclusion of those sectors of rural communities who are economically or socially marginalized, together with the need to strike a balance between the profit driven private sector and the priorities of the politically motivated public sector were issues of great personal concern during this tenure. Simmonds (1977:24) argues that a 'key weakness in Delphi analysis has always been that certain questions were not asked (since) they did not seem important when the study started'. With a view to minimising bias, extreme caution was thus exercised in trying to maintain as closely as possible the integrity of the responses received. This, together with a fear of disregarding issues raised by respondents, contributed to the length of the second round questionnaire.

Second Round Delphi Survey

The purpose of the second round Delphi questionnaire was to develop an understanding of the importance assigned by individual panellists to each of the statements. In order to ensure the comprehensibility of the questionnaire a pilot survey, described by Burton (2000:345) as 'a good place to judge respondent's interest and attention', was undertaken. Four participants emanated from non-academic sectors in South Africa and four were British academics. The pilot participants were asked to provide feedback on the clarity of the questions and on any particular problems encountered in completing the questionnaire (Curnan et al, 1998). The fact that some panellists submitted their responses in the form of questions, whilst others had used statements, presented a problem in the questionnaire compilation. At the suggestion of academic participants all responses were turned into statements in order to solve this dilemma.

The second round questionnaire, accompanied by a letter of instruction (Appendix 2), despatched on 25th March 2002 by email to South African panellists and both email and regular post to British panellists, comprised 304 statements. British participants were sent a self-addressed, pre-stamped envelope in the event that they wished to respond by mail. The cost of postage (R140.00 or £10.00 per envelope) prohibited the adoption of the same approach for South African respondents some of whom replied by facsimile in preference to email. Questionnaires were coded to

maintain panellist anonymity and to assist the researcher in identifying who had responded. 10th May 2002 was set as the closing date for responses.

Panellists were requested to rate statements based on individual judgment of their importance in establishing an index of criteria for inclusion in an evaluation framework for rural tourism projects. Turoff (1975:90) asserts that whilst a variety of rating scales may be used in a Delphi survey, four voting dimensions 'represent the minimum information that must be obtained if an adequate evaluation is to take place'. The allocation of the number four (4) signified that the statement in question was considered essential for inclusion, three (3) denoted that it was considered important, two (2) of minor importance and one (1) that it should not be included. Participants were afforded the use of a zero (0) rating signifying that they were uncertain of, or did not wish to comment on, the statement in question. Inclusion of this rating was considered important 'in order to avoid forced answer bias, which is introduced when the response category is omitted' (Seddighi et al, 1999:6). Panellists were, however, requested to use this scale sparingly since it was important to obtain definitive opinion on the issues concerned. Evaluation of statements in terms of rates or scores was selected in preference to asking respondents to rank statements. While the digits assigned to ranks represent an ordering of issues according to their perceived importance, they have little numerical significance (Abeyasekera, 2002; Abeyasekera et al, 2002). Scores conversely generate results with the numerical meanings necessary in order to undertake statistical analysis and 'have an absolute meaning, while ranks are always relative to the other items under consideration' (Abeyasekera, 2002:4).

Blank space at the end of each cluster afforded panellists the opportunity to add any factors that had come to mind since they had submitted responses to the scoping round of the survey. To overcome possible researcher bias in interpretation of the initial responses, ecological validity (Agar, 1980; Bernard, 1994) was sought by affording panellists the opportunity of adding factors, which in their opinion had been omitted, or incorrectly interpreted, from their initial responses. This obviated the danger of issues being excluded due to seeming lack of importance or of credence not being given to dissenting views, which could provide important new

insights - both omissions that could have weakened the credibility of the survey considerably (Harrison, 1995; Lang, 1995; Targett, 1996). The fact that throughout the Delphi survey only one panellist intimated that certain elements of their scoping round response had not been afforded sufficient emphasis confirms the success of the approach. In point of fact the issues had been included, albeit not in the exact format in which they had been received. This perceived omission was rectified in the third round of the survey when the original input was included verbatim.

Once again the time required for the return of responses was significantly underestimated and three months elapsed before the last responses, from those committed to continuing their participation in the survey, were received. Experience from this study indicates that a period of twelve months should be realistically allocated in which to conduct any large-scale Delphi Survey. This is borne out by Pan et al (1995) who caution that even their mini-Delphi studies took almost twice the amount of time anticipated. The necessity of following-up respondents, as experienced by Mayaka et al (2002) and Pan et al (1995), was a dominant feature of this study. This was done through reminder e-mails. On the positive side this ongoing communication led to a growing rapport between the researcher and panellists and fostered increasing interest, motivation and commitment to continued participation. In the end a heartening 90 percent response was received from South African and 83 percent from British panellists, representing an overall response rate of 87 percent.

Reflection on the second round of the survey highlights that, were the process to be repeated, more thought would be given to alternative ways of phrasing the questionnaires. Although only one panellist raised an objection to the language used, his point is well taken. He argued, that he had awarded some statements a low score, or made use of the zero (0) rating, in protest against the use of the words 'should' or 'should not', which he found too restrictive. Turoff (1975), however records the use of these same words in a Policy Delphi.

Ratings, allocated to each statement in questionnaire responses received, were captured using Microsoft Office Excel format. Since this represented almost 16,000

numbers to be captured and checked, this was a time consuming exercise that was conducted on an ongoing basis as responses were received. Once all ratings had been captured, arithmetic averages and standard deviations for each statement were calculated. Respondents provided a range of useful comments and significant issues were raised pertaining both to individual statements and to the survey as a whole. These comments were captured as near verbatim as possible in order to preserve their integrity and eliminate researcher bias in their interpretation.

Third Round Delphi Survey

This final review sought to ascertain the degree to which consensus was possible for each potential criterion. The third round Delphi Survey invited panellists to either revise, or reaffirm, their responses (Appendix 3) in view of the group response to the second round. The third round of the survey included the individual's own response to the second round questionnaire, the average response of the panel and the standard deviation, thus emphasizing areas of consensus and disagreement. The opportunity was also provided for the submission of factors still deemed to be missing from the list. The comprehensiveness of the original list was however attested to by the fact that only one additional factor, which had already been partially covered, was suggested. Panellists were also asked to indicate whether they would be prepared to participate in the second phase of the research. Third round questionnaires were dispatched to the 52 remaining panellists in early July 2002. The closing date for re-submission was set as 10th August 2002. The standard three months elapsed before all responses were received. Despite the significant time required to administer a Delphi survey, Pan et al (1995:32) nonetheless support the utilisation of at least two rounds and assert that, based on the evidence of three case studies:

However well designed and pre-tested a single round survey might be, the use of subsequent rounds, based upon feedback information, yields a wealth of additional comments and produces sufficient changes in responses to justify the additional time and cost.

The third round of the Delphi Survey elicited an overwhelming 92 percent response rate from British participants. Of the two dropouts one had suffered ill health. The other, unable to continue participation due to pressure of work, requested that a copy

of the final Delphi report be made available to his organisation. South African response was a disappointing 79 percent. The third round of the survey was ill-timed from the perspective that it clashed with the South African hosted World Summit on Sustainable Development in which numerous panellists were involved. Had the prior rounds not taken longer than anticipated this problem would not have arisen. Seventy-five percent of the panellists nonetheless participated in the survey from its inception to its conclusion – a participation rate that, in comparison with other Delphi studies (Mayaka and King, 2002; Pan et al, 1995; Spenceley, 2000) is exceptionally high. Forty-five percent (20) of the panellists, prompted by the findings of the second round, made 373 (2.36 percent) changes to their ratings in the third round. A further 20.5 percent (9) of the panellists did not change their ratings but provided additional comments. Fifty-nine percent of the panellists indicated that they were interested in participation in the second phase of the research.

The primary shortcoming of the Delphi Survey was the length of the questionnaire. Four panellists (academics) commented on this aspect. Only one was, however, particularly negative ‘the results of the survey are questionable since the whole exercise is very time consuming and questionnaire fatigue sets in quickly’. He queried why, in these circumstances, anyone should bother to complete the questionnaire. Despite this critique he participated in the survey from inception to conclusion and professed willingness to participate in the second phase of the research. From the outset the length of the questionnaire posed a dilemma to the researcher. It must, however, be emphasised that the decision to retain so vast a number of potential criteria was taken predominantly as a result of the desire to maintain the integrity of panellist responses from the scoping round of the survey and to get to the crux of the specifics of what was considered most important, rather than reducing issues to general categories. It can be argued that the excellent response rate, particularly in view of the questionnaire length, indicates a high level of respondent interest in the research topic underscoring Veal’s (1997:196) assertion that:

It might be expected that a long questionnaire would discourage potential respondents. It has however been argued that other factors, such as the topic and the presentation of the questionnaire, are more important than the length of the questionnaire – that is, if the topic is interesting to the respondent and is well presented then length is not an issue.

Fourth Round Delphi Survey.

The fourth round of the Delphi Survey, which sought to inform panellists of the final results of the survey, took the form of a report (Appendices 4 and 5). The ratings of those panellists who did not respond to the third round of the survey were subsequently carried forward unchanged from the second round. Beaver (2000) contends that the purpose of a Delphi Survey is not to calculate averages but to obtain group consensus on issues under review. Other researchers, however, (Rowe et al, 1991; Targett, 1996) argue that a group response may be calculated by obtaining an aggregation of individual panellists' ratings in the final round in addition to the dispersion of panellist opinions. Numerous researchers (Green et al, 1990; Kaynak and Macauley, 1984; Liu, 1988; Miller, 2001) have utilised the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation as an indicator of panel consensus.

The data provided in the fourth round report included the panel's aggregated arithmetic mean, the panel's mode and the standard deviation for each of the listed criteria. Qualitative comments from the second round of the survey were synthesized with new comments from the third round and included for the information and interest of panellists. In order to reconfirm the validity of these comments a letter accompanying the report invited panellists who were of the opinion that their comments had not been adequately interpreted or captured to advise the researcher accordingly. Although emails of acknowledgement of the report were received from some panellists, no mention of inaccuracies or misinterpretation was forthcoming.

Reliability of the Delphi Technique

According to Zikmund (1994) there are two underlying dimensions for reliability. These are 'repeatability' and 'internal consistency'. Proponents of the Delphi technique agree that it is difficult to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of a method that has judgment and opinion as its basis (Lang, 1995). Dalkey (1967) cites the tendency of the group to change their initial ratings to conform to the statistical feedback of the panel as a potential problem. Other researchers (Madu et al 1991:118) concur, contending that Delphi findings 'reflect the expert's worldviews,

life experiences, cognitive feelings and perceptions. Thus, these results are based on the participants' subjective assessments, which may also be influenced by data'.

Conversely, other researchers allude to the opportunity for panellists to share opinions and responses as strengths of the technique (Amara, 1975; Ascher and Overholt, 1983; Helmer, 1983). Of the twenty panellists who changed their ratings in the third round, three in fact moved further away from the average rating. Panellist comments emanating from the second round appear to have made a greater impact on changes recorded in the third round than statistical ratings. Panellists reacted to comments from others with interjections such as 'oh yes! I agree with what you say' when amending their original rating. Pan et al (1995:31) attest to the validity of this observation claiming:

Even more significant evidence, however, was the wealth of additional detail yielded by the comments provided by the respondents to the second and third rounds which could not have been gained from a single-round survey because most had been prompted by other respondents' comments in the previous round.

A mere 2.32 percent (367 of 15,808) of ratings changed, in the third round, to draw nearer to the panel mean for specific statements. In keeping with Liu (1988) and Miller (2001) who contend that only a slight move towards consensus between rounds renders further consultation superfluous, a fourth consultative round was not deemed necessary. Only 1.42 percent of the statements were allocated a zero (0) rating indicating that the respondent was uncertain or did not wish to comment on the statement in question.

The Delphi Technique is an iterative, interactive cognition process (Turoff and Hiltz, 1996) with the final outcome based upon internal consistency. The findings represent the opinion of a group of experts relating to the enquiry. Armstrong (1989) contends that one of the most interesting aspects of the Delphi Technique is the fact that the most valuable input does not always emerge from either the most experienced member of the team or those with the highest reputation. He also argues that in an

open group situation the opinions of those participants with a wealth of experience or an enhanced reputation would seldom be challenged and perceives this as an innate strength of the Delphi Technique that contributes to the credibility of its findings. Researchers nonetheless contend that a Delphi survey should ideally be part of a more comprehensive exercise combining with other qualitative and quantitative methods (Masini, 1993; Rieger, 1986; Yuxiang et al, 1990) and that the use of Delphi originated data in combination with other results 'helps create confidence in the overall package...it is rare that Delphi results alone can help resolve an issue when preparing a recommendation' (Day, 1975:188).

Members of the Delphi expert panel in this study also offered some critique of the Delphi technique. A South African consultant indicated that he had not changed his original ratings based on the fact that 'I do not see why I should change my mind simply on the basis of some average score'. A South African project manager, acknowledging the subjectivity of her responses, argued 'it would be tempting to change my scores but I think it is important to keep in mind that the scoring reflects a response to certain questions and reflects a perception relative to a specific context in time. There is always some personal impression involved in terms of rating'. A British academic also commented on the issue of subjective judgment 'I guess at the end of the day the importance each respondent attaches to each item depends on his or her perspective/disciplinary approach. There will be differing responses depending on the background, location and particular interest of the consultee. Each brings a different and particular perspective'. The inclusion of diverse viewpoints is however considered a strong point of the research. Attempts were made to investigate the research problem holistically, seeking the larger picture and more wide-ranging standpoint, as opposed to a simplistic perspective in which only the point of view of panellists of a particular sector/discipline/background was taken into account. Two British panellists expressed reservations regarding the inclusion of other panellist comments although this is a primary feature of the Delphi technique. An academic argued 'now you have added comment for specific questions this can manage perception; cause a change in response. I have ignored these'. A public sector panellist averred, 'I am not happy with the way some of the suggestions for evaluation involvement carry ancillary remarks of a judgmental nature. Either you

reveal your views on every statement or on none. I would prefer the latter. If these are the views of other contributors then the same philosophy should apply'. The respondent was assured that these were not the personal views of the researcher but comments emanating from other panellists.

Despite its limitations, the use of the Delphi Technique yielded valuable information relative to criteria considered important for inclusion in the index of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects and emphasised those issues requiring further interrogation. Pollard and Tomlin (1995) argue that the Delphi Technique is a potent device for allowing people to think about problems in more complex ways that they ordinarily would, a factor attested to by panellists in this study. The Delphi survey, which moved from qualitative data in the scoping round to quantitative findings in the ensuing rounds, provided the basis for the sequential use of further qualitative research methods designed both to better inform and understand the multi-faceted aspects of rural tourism project evaluation and to derive confidence in the findings of the Delphi survey.

Denzin (1978) refers to methodological triangulation as a process in which the same topic is examined by more than one research method. Oppermann (2000:145), who is against the use of the term other than when applied to data or investigator triangulation, however strongly argues:

Triangulation is not simply the crossing bridge between quantitative and qualitative research methods...triangulation is more about verification of results and, in the process, identifying and eliminating methodological shortcomings, data or investigator bias.

Oppermann (2000:145) nonetheless acknowledges that utilising multiple methods enables researchers to have more confidence in their results and that 'the multi-dimensional perspective will provide new insights behind the respective walls of individual methodological or data approaches'. Holland (2002) similarly asserts that the use of mutually supportive qualitative and quantitative data, generated through a range of research methods, enhances 'credibility'. The findings of the Delphi Survey provided those factors to be included in a suggested index of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Utilisation of a focus group and semi-structured

interviews as supplementary research methods allowed for the reinforcement of the key findings in order to increase validity and for the further probing of issues that had emerged during the course of the Delphi Survey.

Analysis of Delphi Survey Data

The analysis of data from the Delphi survey was an ongoing process, taking place at the conclusion of each round. Results were calculated three times. Firstly, calculations were based on the ratings of the entire expert panel. Secondly, results were calculated separately for South African and British panellists in order to highlight differences of opinion between the two groups. Thirdly, the categorization of panellists into four sectors (academic, public sector, consultants and operational sector) allowed for the calculation of each variable per independent sector in order that differences between sectors could be compared and interrogated. This permitted an insight into whether the views of panellists in various areas of expertise differed either from those in other areas or from those of the overall panel. Adopting this approach highlighted not only the degree of consensus between, but also within sectors. Lack of parity between numbers in the various sectors, however, prohibited the calculation of intrasector variances for each country. For example, although the four sectors were numerically well balanced, within the academic sector 75 percent of the panel emanated from Britain and only 25 percent from South Africa.

Descriptive statistical tests were employed in analysing the data, which was captured using a Microsoft Office Excel package. For each variable the arithmetic mean, the mode, the standard deviation, the frequency distribution, and the percentage of the respondent panel that rated the individual criterion as either 3 or 4, was calculated. Criteria were then sorted in descending order of importance based on the percentage of the overall panel by whom each was awarded the rating 3 or 4. Where more than one criteria achieved the same percentage, the frequency by which the criteria was rated 3 or 4 was taken into account at the second level, followed by the arithmetic mean.

Sample size is a significant factor in establishing whether meaningful statistical tests can be performed (Fink and Kosecoff, 1985; Punch, 1998). Punch (1998:134) posits

that 'the smaller the sample size, the bigger the numerical value of the statistic required in order to reach significance'. Similarly Fink and Kosecoff (1985:75) assert that while groups of 20 or 30 are of a sufficient size for some statistical comparisons, if these groups were further sub-divided there are very few techniques of statistical analysis that could produce meaningful results. Since each of the four sectors into which panellists were divided numbered less than 20, inferential statistics were not used in analysing the data.

Not all panellists in the second round of the survey accorded a rating to every statement. This feature, referred to as 'missing values' (Ryan, 1995:198; Veal, 1997:231) is not uncommon in surveys in general, including Delphi surveys (Pan et al, 1995). However, several panellists who had in error left columns blank in the second round of the survey corrected this omission in the third round. In the end 0.41percent (65 of the 15,808 total ratings) was left blank. Veal (1997) argues that the decision on whether missing values should be included in calculations is dependent on the judgment of the researcher. Ryan (1995:191) further asserts that 'in general it is safer if such non-replies are not included in the data on the premise that it is dangerous for the researcher to make any imputation as to what is in the mind of the respondent at the time of the response'. Based on the low number of non-responses these have not been included in data calculations.

SECOND PHASE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The first phase of this research utilised the Delphi Technique. The second phase consisted of a focus group, conducted in South Africa, and seventeen semi-structured interviews held in South Africa and Britain. The Delphi study successfully gathered basic data, identified the major concerns held by Delphi expert panellists and provided an understanding of the importance accorded to potential criteria by participants. It was, however, impossible to describe the intricacies, processes and complexities of rural tourism, which cannot be reduced to numbers, in survey research. The Delphi Technique was thus unable to generate the in-depth discussion, deeper understanding and useful response sought from the second phase of the research process. Nor could it afford the opportunity for the researcher to experience the affective and cognitive aspects of informant's responses or to seek the

clarification necessary to gain full understanding of such responses (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997).

Based upon the need to verify the findings of the Delphi Survey and to further examine and engender a deeper understanding of pertinent issues raised by its panellists, the second phase of the research process sought to elicit opinion from and instigate discussion with a diversity of rural tourism roleplayers. In particular issues relating to the implementation of evaluation in the rural tourism domain, and an understanding of the social and political contexts in which such evaluation would be undertaken, could not be reduced to numerical data. The second phase of the research thus sought, by using a qualitative approach, to examine, explain, confirm and enrich the findings of the Delphi Survey with additional data and bring to light overlapping and divergent aspects of the research issue (Carvalho and Whyte, 1997). The process followed in this phase of data collection was two-pronged. In October 2002 a focus group, comprising six members, and eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with South African respondents. This was followed during the period November 2002 to April 2003 by nine semi-structured telephonic interviews undertaken with British respondents.

The Focus Group

Powell and Single (1996:499) define focus groups as 'a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment, from personal experience, on the topic that is the subject of the research'. Krueger and Casey (2000:198) in turn argue that focus group research 'is not the type of scientific research that seeks to control and predict, but it is the type that seeks to provide understanding and insight'. Advocates of focus group research (Morgan and Kreuger, 1993) argue that the method is particularly useful when the researcher seeks to interrogate the degree of consensus, the disparity of opinion, or to understand the differences in perspective between group members on a given topic. It is further argued that focus groups have proved particularly useful in facilitating interpretation and adding depth to the responses solicited in a quantitative survey (Morgan and Krueger, 1993; Punch, 1998; Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). The use of a focus group was thus considered appropriate as a means of exploring issues which had arisen from the Delphi Survey

in this study and of utilising group dynamics as a means of challenging the stance of participants and exposing differing opinions (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Focus Groups

It is asserted that the primary attribute of focus group research is the insight, information and enriched data generated as a result of the interaction between group members (Carey, 1994; Frechtling and Sharp, 1997; Gibbs, 1997). The focus group provided the researcher with an excellent means of learning not only about predominant issues, but also the context of member viewpoints. The adaptability of the focus group and its facility to assist in exposing those issues most important to participants is considered one of its greatest strengths as a research tool (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). The interaction, which ensued during the discussion elucidated the problems of misunderstanding and lack of communication existing both between the public and private sectors in the province in which the focus group meeting took place, and between the government department and its tourism agency, and highlighted those issues on which there was consensus. The session also served as an enabling mechanism for participants to express their views with the expectation that, since a senior official of the provincial tourism department was a fellow participant, these would be noted and taken into consideration in future decision-making processes. Researchers in other fields (Morgan, 1988; Race et al, 1994) have highlighted similar strengths of the focus group approach in their studies.

Like every data collection method focus groups have their limitations. There are, however, diverse arguments in this regard. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) argue that the quality of the data is subject to influence by the amount of direction provided by the moderator. Morgan (1988), on the other hand, alleges that one of the primary constraints of focus groups is the limited control exerted by the moderator both over group interaction and the type of data produced, despite the fact that the moderator may, if necessary, intervene in order to re-focus the discussion back to the research topic. From the perspective of this study, the open-ended character of the focus group is viewed as constructive since the data produced provided invaluable insight into the perceptions and attitudes of group members.

Carey (1994) argues that the interpretation of focus group data is complex since views expressed are moulded by social context and input from other members. Gibbs (1997:4) agrees that it may be difficult for researchers to identify group members 'own definitive, individual view' since discussion might be influenced by the desire to conform to group opinion. In particular Krueger (1988) points out that where participants do not have definitive views on a topic, they are prone to influence by other group members. Fear by group members that statements made might in the future be held against them may also serve as a factor that inhibits frank and open discussion. The degree of debate amongst the focus group members in this study, however, indicated that neither censoring nor withholding of information served as a limitation to the quality of the discussion. The paucity of opportunity for communication that encourages honest expressions of opinion was, in point of fact, decried as a weakness of the prevailing tourism management system in the province in which the focus group took place. Censoring and conformity factors could be viewed as especially relevant to public sector participants who speak, generally, from a politically correct rather than a personal perspective. The public sector members of this focus group nonetheless expressed argumentative and critical views and openly admitted to failings on the part of the public sector in fulfilling its role in rural tourism development.

Focus group proponents (Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger and Casey, 2000) point out that the purposive nature and size of the sample does not allow for the generalisation of findings to a greater constituency. It is also argued that data from a single focus group cannot overcome the fact that the content of the discussion may have been due either to the unique composition of the particular group or its dynamics (Morgan and Krueger, 1993). The study acknowledges the limitations of the focus group in this regard. The 'credibility' of the focus group data is, however, supported by the fact that eight semi-structured interviews, conducted with South African respondents as a support to the focus group, produced highly analogous findings. Whilst it could be argued that bringing together rural tourism stakeholders from diverse geographical locations would have provided more reliable findings, the limitations imposed by the cost of transporting group participants over considerable physical distances rendered this impossible.

The Selection of Focus Group Members

Like the Delphi Technique, the quality of data generated by focus group discussion is dependent upon the quality of the group members (Gibbs, 1997; Greenbaum, 1998; Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990) who should be selected on the basis of common experience, similar levels of understanding pertinent to the research topic and capacity to provide stimulating, quality input into the discussion (Carey, 1994; Greenbaum, 1998; Morgan, 1988). Most researchers advocate an optimal focus group size of between five and twelve members (Carey, 1994; Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger and Casey, 2000) since it is argued that participants feel more comfortable and offer greater input in smaller groups. However, caution is expressed that too small groups will not yield the diversity of opinion sought, will generate a smaller pool of data and are at risk of domination by one or two members (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990).

Researchers have recently questioned the contention that better data is obtained when group members are strangers. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) assert that the influence of acquaintance on focus group data is insignificant while Frey (1994) argues that the short-term establishment of small groups of strangers, instead of studying existing groups in their own environment, is a primary disadvantage of focus group research. Krueger and Casey (2000), however, stress that the prime consideration in determining group members should be the purpose of the focus group. Prospective focus group members were purposively selected on the basis that each was actively involved, yet fulfilled a different role, in the rural tourism sector within a specific provincial geographical location. Each had a personal interest in the findings of the study and each was able to offer valuable contribution based on experience. Membership of the focus group was thus deliberately designed to bring together individuals who were known to each other, operated within the same geographical and political environment, represented different layers of the rural tourism sector and could offer the calibre of information sought by the research.

In September 2002 letters of invitation were sent to ten focus group prospects. Although it had been decided that a group of seven would be optimal in allowing for group interaction, allowance was made for the fact that not all invitees would accept the invitation. Three private sector invitees included a small rural hotelier, the

operator of a rural cultural tourism project and a micro tour operator (classification according to European Commission categories). Three invitees were from the public sector. One emanated from the provincial tourism department. The second was a highly experienced tourism officer from a local council. The third, the leader of the government's reconstruction and development agenda at district council level, originated from the Provincial Premier's office. Invitations were sent to two tourism consultants. The expertise of one lay predominantly in the field of small, medium and micro tourism enterprise development. The other was experienced in the planning and management of rural tourism projects. Finally participation was solicited from two representatives of the provincial tourism marketing agency. Since the province does not have a university, representation could not be sought from the academic sector. Fifty percent of the invitees had been involved in the Delphi Survey (one in the pilot study and four as panellists). This breakdown was deliberate in view of the importance of further investigating data from the Delphi survey and in soliciting new ideas from a wider audience. Of prime importance was the significance of the role each invitee played in the provincial rural tourism sector and the expertise and insight which each could bring to the table.

Seven (70 percent) of the invitees agreed to participate. Balancing gender and racial participation again proved difficult. Two of the group members were female. Two acceptances were received from non-white invitees, one of whom failed to arrive at the session on the basis of 'an unexpected emergency'. The six-member focus group ultimately consisted of equal representation from the public and private sector, a factor considered important in maintaining balanced viewpoints and ensuring that one sector did not feel intimidated by the other.

Administration of The Focus Group

The letter of invitation outlined the purpose of the focus group and solicited participation from the invitee (Appendix 6). This information was supplemented in the introductory remarks to the focus group session during which participants were afforded the opportunity of asking questions and clarifying their understanding with regard to the prior process and the purpose to be served by the focus group discussion. The focus group process is neither confidential nor anonymous since all group members share the input generated (Carey, 1994; Gibbs, 1997). In order to

overcome any uncertainty in this regard the potential future use of the data generated was also carefully explained to participants at the commencement of the session.

The degree of focus group structure is dependent on both participants and the researcher, who should be flexible, adaptive and take cues from group interaction. Carey (1994) and Greenbaum (1998) argue that if important issues or fruitful areas of discussion are aired the researcher may allow the discussion to develop, yielding valuable new data. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990:62) point out that 'groups often take on lives of their own and agendas are dictated by the natural flow of discussions'. Although the same questions (Appendix 7) had been prepared for both the focus group and semi-structured interviews the first question, which sought to ascertain how members perceived the role of the public sector in rural tourism, elicited animated discussion and raised significant issues. The viewpoints and concerns pertinent on-the-ground and expressed in layman's terms was considered invaluable. This led to the curtailment of discussion on other questions due to time constraints. To ensure that discussion had been correctly interpreted a summary was intermittently fed back to participants in order to check its validity. This on occasion stimulated further discussion.

Reflection on the Focus Group

The researcher functioned as the focus group moderator. Researcher bias, which is prone to manifest itself by affording undue importance to the opinion of group members which coincides with that of the researcher, is identified as the primary limiting factor in reporting factual information and interpretation of focus group data (Greenbaum, 1998:69). The fact that the researcher fulfilled the role of moderator had both positive and negative consequences. The researcher was well known to focus group members. This contributed to a relaxed atmosphere in which participants honestly and openly articulated their views and attitudes and debated conflicting opinion with regard to rural tourism issues. Group members viewed the researcher as a respected practitioner in the field. This, however, led to members occasionally soliciting her opinion. A resolute approach was adopted in which researcher participation was limited to asking questions or confirming and clarifying member input. This was difficult, but imperative, in order to maintain the balance between remaining independent and neutral and getting valid and reliable findings. It is,

however, argued that researchers as instruments of data collection and analysis are not objective but part of what they research (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Smith, 1988). The researcher and the research topic are thus interdependent. Humberstone (1997:199) similarly argues that 'all research is in some way subjective'. The danger of bias was of prime concern in view of the researcher's previously reported experience in the rural tourism sector. Data consequently needed to be handled with caution in the realization that 'it is inevitable that the words we use to record data from the field will reflect, to some extent, our own concepts' (Punch, 1998:61).

The focus group meeting took place in Nelspruit on 01st October 2002 between 1000 and 1300 hours. In order to capture the exact proceedings permission was sought to tape record the meeting. After almost two hours of discussion, the recorder mutilated the tape. Handwritten notes had, however, been taken throughout the session. Rough notes made by some of the group members during the discussion were also collected. These field notes were subsequently captured and interpreted as a full record of the proceedings on 07th October. The lapse of six days between the focus group meeting and the interpretation of the field notes is accounted for by the fact that during this period seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents geographically spread through four different provinces. This involved a substantial amount of travel and made access to a computer difficult.

The need to overcome the danger of researcher bias and to establish the 'ecological validity' (Agar, 1980; Bernard, 1994) of interpretation was rendered imperative by the failure of the audio recording. A copy of the rough field notes and their interpretation was sent to each of the focus group members requesting that they verify the failure of the audio recorder and the reliability of the interpretation. Members were also requested to amend or add to any aspect of the notes or interpretation, which they deemed to be incorrectly reported. Five of the six group members responded. Only one member made a slight addition to data accredited to him. A very short, garbled email was received from the sixth member. A request to resend the correspondence received no response.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of interviews, as one element of the second phase data collection process in this study, was indicated by the need for exploration of issues raised by respondents to the Delphi survey, which warranted more detailed investigation in the hope of gaining new insights into recurring problems. Interviews as a data collection method were rendered even more important by the fact that cost constraints rendered the conduct of more than one focus group in South Africa unfeasible. In addition, problems of access to groups of rural tourism stakeholders in Britain, who lived within reasonable geographical distance of each other and were willing to participate for no monetary recompense in a focus group session, rendered this option beyond the scope of possibility. Constraints of time, distance and costs involved in transporting appropriate participants to a central point exacerbated the lack of feasibility of this approach.

Consideration was given to the possibility of conducting a British focus group session either telephonically or utilising the internet. Both methods have the advantage of being able to convene group members from a wide variety of different areas at an extremely low cost. This was, however, outweighed by the disadvantages. Firstly, the researcher would have little opportunity of ensuring that every participant had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Secondly, the benefits of group interaction would be severely restricted. Finally, it was unlikely that group members, with the distractions of their own offices, would remain focused on the topic under discussion for a prolonged period of time. The data elicited would consequently not provide the depth and insight required (Greenbaum, 1998). In view of these limitations the decision was taken to underpin the data emanating from the Delphi Survey and Focus Group with a series of semi-structured interviews.

Selection of Interviewees

The use of interviews as a data collection method starts from the assumption that interviewee perspectives are significant, useful and comprehensible and will produce rich, detailed data for analysis (Frechtling and Sharp 1997; Patton, 1990). The initial intention had been to restrict participation in the second phase of the research to those experts who had been involved in the Delphi survey. Emergent data from the Delphi survey however indicated the need for inclusion of persons not involved in

the first phase of the research enquiry who could, by virtue of their academic expertise or on-the-ground rural tourism experience, enhance the understanding or augment the data previously collected. Soliciting the opinion of candidates with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the pitfalls and constraints experienced in the development and management of rural tourism projects was considered essential. Since the purpose of the research was to select interviewees who could yield rich, detailed data purposive sampling was practiced.

Due to time constraints and in view of the fact that a focus group meeting had already been held in South Africa, the number of interviews was restricted to seven. An eighth South African, who had participated as a Delphi panellist and subsequently relocated to Britain, was later interviewed at her home in Slough. The suitability of prospective interviewees based on their field of expertise within the rural tourism sector was deemed to be of prime importance. Consideration was given to selecting interviewees from diverse geographical locations throughout the country and drawn from different levels of the rural tourism sector. All but one of the South African interviewees had participated in the Delphi survey. Whilst time constraints and transport costs imposed some limitation on the interview process, interviewees were drawn from four South African provinces. All South African interviews, which were of 30 to 60 minutes duration, were conducted on a face-to-face basis.

A further nine interviews were conducted in Britain. In an attempt to include interviewees from diverse regions within this country selection was purposefully based on a combination of their level of expertise and geographical location. Five interviewees were from different counties in England. Two were from Wales and two from Scotland. This dispersal did impose limitations on the interview process as cost constraints made travel to nine different centres in order to conduct face-to-face interviews unfeasible. Interviews lasting between 20 and 40 minutes were thus conducted telephonically. Six of the interviewees had previously participated in the Delphi Survey.

Administration of the Interviews

In all cases letters requesting an interview were emailed to the prospective interviewee at least fourteen days prior to the event. Set times and locations were confirmed for face-to-face interviews in South Africa and time slots arranged for telephonic interviews in Britain. At the onset of the interview informants were briefed as to the purpose of the enquiry, were assured of anonymity and permission was sought to record the interview proceedings either technologically or by means of field notes. A relationship with those interviewees who had participated in the Delphi study had already been established and their interest in both the topic and the outcomes of the research rendered them willing informants.

The continuum of interview types ranges from the highly structured in which questions asked of respondents are pre-established and standardised on the one end, to unstructured, open-ended, in-depth conversations on the other (Punch, 1998). Between these lies the semi-structured or general interview guide approach (Patton, 1980) adopted by this study. Whilst the interview guide used in the semi-structured interview approach has predetermined questions, the order may be modified and questions amended or deleted as appropriate (Robson, 2002). Questions posed to interviewees are open-ended and where necessary responses are clarified or further information sought through follow-up questions. The interview process was facilitated by the use of the same interview guide (Appendix 7) as that developed for the focus group. Discussion from the focus group relating to the imperative of access to information however led to the inclusion of a new question in this regard. Semi-structured interviews were thus used to follow-up and further explore issues that had been raised by the findings of both the Delphi Survey and the focus group. A significant degree of flexibility was permitted affording interviewees the freedom to introduce new issues, determine the content of the discussion and provide information they felt was important to engendering a deeper understanding of the topic (Bernard, 1988; Patton, 1990). Questions addressed to participants varied slightly dependent upon their field of expertise and relationship to the problem under investigation. This approach was adopted in order to encourage interviewees to elaborate on their way of thinking about the topic under discussion and to assist the researcher in gleaning all the information deemed by the interviewee to be important

to the issues being examined. Interviews sought to acquire more explicit information with regard to potential evaluation criteria and elicit open and frank comment relating to the implementation of evaluation of rural tourism projects. The role of the public sector, as perceived by interviewees, was also further probed.

Interviews conducted in South Africa were, with the permission of the interviewee, recorded by means of handwritten field notes. This was necessitated by the malfunction of the researcher's tape recording device. Interviews in South Africa took place between Monday 30th September and Monday 07th October 2002. A full interpretation of the notes was made on the researcher's return to Britain on 08th October 2002. The final South African interview, conducted in Britain on 24th November 2002, was tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. In order to ensure the ecological validity (Agar, 1980; Bernard, 1994) of the researcher's interpretation of the handwritten field notes a copy was emailed to each individual interviewee with the request that they confirm the accuracy of the interpretation and offering them the opportunity to make additions or amendments, as they deemed necessary. One interviewee did not respond to this request. Two of the interviewees made slight amendments. In one of these a sentence was rephrased. In the other the interviewee requested that the name of a specific village be deleted.

Telephonic interviews conducted in Britain were, with the permission of the interviewee, captured on a telephone-recording device. During the first telephone interview conducted on 09th December 2002 the recording device, on this occasion belonging to the college, again malfunctioned. Previous experience had however led to the researcher taking notes during the interview. These were immediately transferred to a word processor and a copy sent to the interviewee for confirmation. This experience however led to the researcher purchasing a new recorder. The remaining eight British interviews were all tape recorded and transcribed within hours. Telephonic interviews were from 20 to 40 minutes duration.

Interview Limitations

Critics of the interview as a data collection method question the influence exerted by the interviewer in conducting the interview. They view the data produced as disputable and posit that there is a danger of interviewees yielding information, which is distorted through selective perception or desire to please the interviewer (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997; Silverman, 1993). Others warn that the quality of the data is largely dependent on the interviewer and that inadequate interviewing skills may result in incorrect understanding and misreporting of responses (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997; Patton, 1990). Denzin and Lincoln (1994:353) similarly highlight the role of the interviewer:

The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity and gender.

As in the preceding phases of data collection the researcher was acutely aware of the dangers of researcher bias, which at all times presented a great personal dilemma. The failure to tape-record the South African interviews intensified this concern leading to the steps taken to ensure the ecological validity (Agar, 1980; Bernard, 1994) of the data interpretation. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the interviewees were all well known to the researcher. Nonetheless, all the interviewees were able to bring new insights to the rural tourism topic. A prime example, which emerged from the interviews, is the new role, which universities envisage for themselves in support of rural tourism projects. The potential for researcher influence on British interviews was substantially mitigated by three factors. Firstly, none of the interviewees were well known to the researcher. Secondly, the fact that the interviews were conducted telephonically, as opposed to face-to-face, severely curtailed opportunity for interpersonal contact. Thirdly, the researcher had no previous in-depth experience of rural tourism in Britain and thus carried no preconceived ideas in this regard.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Analysis of qualitative data in the scoping round of the Delphi survey gave rise to the questionnaire used in the second and third rounds of the survey. A substantial number of potential criteria submitted by panellists in the scoping round of the survey were identified as issues pertaining to the public sector role in rural tourism as opposed to criteria against which individual projects could be evaluated. Rather than discarding these issues, they were perceived as a potentially important lead to follow and a cluster relating to the public sector was included in the second round Delphi questionnaire.

The Delphi survey elicited both quantitative data (in the form of ratings) and qualitative data (in the form of panellists' comments). Panellist comments from the Delphi Survey were coded and categorised. From recurring topics within the data the need for three primary areas of further investigation were identified. These were: 1) the role of the public sector in the development of rural tourism; 2) the criteria by which rural tourism projects should be evaluated; and 3) issues pertaining to the implementation of rural tourism project evaluation. Whilst the first two topics had emerged from the scoping round of the Delphi survey, the complexities and conflicting opinions relating to project evaluation implementation emanated from the qualitative comments of panellists. Questions relating to implementation were thus included in the focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. Similarly a question relating to the topic of information provision, which emerged from the focus group discussion, was included in the semi-structured interviews that followed. Both the focus and the objectives of the research thus evolved as the research process progressed.

Analysis of the panellist comments from the Delphi Survey was conducted manually. Individual comments were initially clustered, condensed by the removal of duplications and captured under the Delphi Survey cluster to which they related. Colour coding assisted in the identification of recurring words and themes, which were then brought together in provisional categories such as training, partnerships, bureaucracy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The country and sector originator of each unit of data was also captured by means of a code. This was considered of particular

significance since it was likely that the qualitative data would provide greater insight to and understanding of the differences between countries and sectors, which emerged from quantitative analysis of the Delphi survey data.

There are conflicting views as to how the coding of focus group data should be carried out. Catterall and Maclaran (1997) argue that both issues and participants should be traced throughout the text. In this way contradictory comment from a particular participant, a change of opinion on a specific topic, or the addition of new information on an issue can be identified and documented. Morgan (1997) suggests that data from focus groups should be coded in complementary ways. All mention of a given code (word, topic, sentence) should be recorded. Similarly each individual participant's mention of that particular code should be noted. In this way each code, or topic, can be recorded throughout the duration of the discussion and attributed where applicable to individual participants.

A manual system of colour coding was adopted in condensing and sorting the data. Coding was undertaken in three stages during which the text was constantly reviewed as patterns and topics evolved. Firstly, particular topics were traced throughout the text. Secondly, the relationship between individual group members and the topics identified was noted. Thirdly, contradictory comment, changes of opinion, or additional information presented by any participant on a specific topic was traced. Annotations with regard to non-verbal communication had been made where relevant. Antagonism towards the provincial tourism department official was noted from two members. The official himself reacted defensively. In each case this was significant since it emphasized the communication problem that exists between the tourism department and other rural tourism roleplayers. The analysis process was thus characterised by the categorisation and coding of units of data and the identification of links and relationships between individuals and themes. For example it was noteworthy how frequently public sector members of the focus group themselves referred to the lack of capacity within the public sector.

The first step in the analysis of the interview data consisted of summarizing the field notes and interview transcripts to reduce the data into a more manageable format.

This was followed at the first level by a process of coding key words and phrases. Coding was guided by themes and categories identified in the literature and utilized in the Delphi Survey. Where new codes were suggested by the data these were developed as the analysis progressed. The second round of interview analysis consisted of identifying themes and patterns running through the data. At this stage the interview data emanating from South African and British respondents was coded separately. Codes were also allocated to each unit of data to identify the sector from which the data had originated.

The third level of analysis involved tracing the themes and links running throughout the data. Similarities and differences between panellists from different countries and sectors were traced and linked back to the findings of the Delphi survey. For example issues pertaining to community participation drew greater comment from South African respondents throughout the research. This is explained by the fact that in the current political climate in South Africa inclusivity is a burning issue. Links between categories and themes were also traced. For example the lack of business skills that impede small rural tourism operators (discussed in Chapter Seven) and the public sector role in providing mentoring services (discussed in Chapter Five). The tracing of patterns and linkages was ongoing and even during the process of writing up the research findings, modifications were being made with regard to the placing of the data as linkages became increasing apparent in explaining and reinforcing the results. The qualitative data analysis thus followed Huberman and Miles (1994:433) cyclical interaction through which data is summarised; themes, patterns and relationships identified and plotted; and explanations developed.

Concluding Points

The research methods adopted aimed at generating knowledge and identifying those criteria that pertain to rural tourism project viability and the sociocultural, socioeconomic and environmental impacts of rural tourism projects on the host community. No single research method could have elicited the comprehensive information sought by this study. Whilst the Delphi Technique was considered the most effective means of soliciting group input and opinion forming by a panel of

experts utilising a manageable method, it was unable to facilitate the in-depth discussion and enriched text required in order to gain a fuller understanding of significant and contentious issues. The opportunity afforded by the focus group and semi-structured interviews for interaction and meaningful discussion relative to important issues relating to the evaluation of rural tourism projects were vital to the success of the study.

The utilisation of complementary quantitative and qualitative research methods facilitated the accommodation of disparate opinions, solicited from a diverse range of actors within the rural tourism domain. This was considered essential to the credibility of the research findings. It is nonetheless acknowledged that the results of the study are representations of a 'reality' constructed by the interpretations of the researcher and the data generated by those respondents who participated in the research (Wickens, 1999). Humberstone (1997:201) argues that 'knowledge constituted by research becomes acceptable/unacceptable, valid/invalid depending on whether it fits with the values, assumptions and ideologies of those in a position to legitimate its credibility'. There is evidence that the knowledge generated by this study is already proving helpful to respondents in South Africa, a factor that attests both to its credibility and utility.

Presentation of the research findings commences in Chapter Five. Since the role of the public sector provides the backdrop against which rural tourism should be developed and managed, these findings take precedence in the order of presentation. This is followed in Chapter Six by the presentation of the criteria, developed by respondents, against which it is suggested the impacts of rural tourism projects on the wider host environment should be evaluated. Chapter Seven, which narrows the focus to issues internal to rural tourism projects, presents the proposed criteria that relate to project planning and management. Congruence and differences between the findings of the research and the literature review in Chapter Two are highlighted throughout these chapters. Finally Chapter Eight examines the practical application of evaluation in the rural tourism arena and the responsibility for its implementation. Findings in Chapter Eight are related to issues arising from the literature pertaining both to rural tourism in Chapter Two and evaluation in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN RURAL TOURISM: RESPONDENTS' VIEWS

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss those findings derived from data analysis that establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism projects. Results originate from the ratings allocated by panellists in the Delphi Survey supported by their comments. Findings from a focus group held in South Africa in October 2002 and seventeen semi-structured interviews, conducted in South Africa and Britain between October 2002 and April 2003, further confirm the importance in which respondents perceive the role of the public sector.

Results of the research pertaining to the public sector are consolidated into three themes. The first theme relates to respondent's perceptions of the public sector role in the governance, planning and management of rural tourism. The second theme reflects the public sector's role in the field of tourism education, training and awareness. Public sector support in the fields of funding, marketing and information provision comprise the third theme. Presentation of data and discussion of the findings takes place within the context of these themes. Only statements rated 3 or 4 by at least 80% of either British or South African panellists are included for discussion.

Throughout Chapters Five to Eight where direct quotes are used as a means of giving voice to respondents in their own terms, the originating country and sector of the respondent is shown in brackets. In presentation and discussion of findings where reference is made to academics, public sector, consultants or operators this means respondents representing these sectors and is not a generalisation to the wider population. The presentation of results commences with an overview of the research findings in relation to the public sector role in rural tourism.

Presentation of Results

An Overview of the Public Sector Role in Rural Tourism

Delphi panellists expressed diverse views pertaining to 'how' the public sector should be involved in rural tourism. Some panellists advocated partnership between the public and private sectors and local communities. Others emphasised that the role of government should be restricted to one of facilitation and support. 'Government should be actively discouraged from being involved in commercial tourism projects, even community-based tourism projects' (South African consultant). Panellists also expressed the opinion that whilst government should be the enabler, the private sector and communities should be the drivers of rural tourism development. Both Delphi panellists and interviewees generally perceived the role of the public sector as one of governance, facilitation and support as opposed to one of operational involvement in rural tourism projects. Focus group members similarly emphasised that government should be the catalyst rather than the implementer of action.

Interviewees described the role of government as providing 'the platform from which private sector operates' (South African consultant). Part of this platform was seen to comprise the legislative framework, fiscal policy and clear tourism policy guidelines and incentives for compliance delivery 'ensuring a regulatory framework within which the rural tourism sector can operate' (British consultant). These findings are complementary to the role of the public sector expounded both in the literature (for example Hall and Jenkins, 1998) and in current British and South African tourism policies and strategies (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999; Government of South Africa, 1996; Scottish Executive, 2000). Public sector principles for tourism responsibility thus correlate with the public sector role envisioned by respondents yet, as evidence from the findings will demonstrate, respondents are not confident that the public sector is adequately fulfilling its responsibilities. Similar findings emanated from the literature. For example, although Hall and Jenkins (1995) describe public policy as the focus of government action, Pearce (1992) argues that the policy process accentuates the public sector lack of understanding of the tourism industry and their role within it. A deficiency Middleton and Hawkins (1998:105) label as 'the most critical constraint to tourism development'.

South African panellists expressed particular concern at the perceived public sector lack of capacity. 'The involvement and/or responsibility of government is a debatable issue and is influenced by the knowledge and understanding of the officials concerned. Care must be taken that the power does not reside without necessary insight and knowledge' (South African operator). Caution was, however, also expressed that where government is not involved there is a tendency to deliberately delay bureaucratic processes thus inhibiting development. Tosun (2000) has documented similar findings in other less-developed countries.

The exigency of local authorities accepting responsibility for tourism was emphasised by both focus group members and South African interviewees. Nonetheless, public sector members of the focus group acknowledged that 'although involvement in tourism is now compulsory for local government there is little understanding and lack of capacity in this sector'. Criticism of the levels of implementation capacity at local authority level was not limited to South Africa. It was alleged that in Britain 'local authorities have achieved very little on the ground. Overall management mechanisms are not efficient. A lot of potential is being lost through divergence of resources into public sector programmes' (consultant). The recognition of local government as a primary roleplayer in the rural tourism field, and of its lack of capacity to fulfil this role, has emerged as a key finding of this research.

The Public Sector Role in the Governance, Planning and Management of Rural Tourism

In what follows results of the Delphi survey pertaining to the public sector (Appendix 9) are supported by panellist comments and the findings of the focus group and semi-structured interviews. Integral to the platform or framework within which the public sector operates are the institutional structures established to govern, manage and support the rural tourism sector.

Institutional Issues:

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
There should be a viable implementation plan to establish appropriate institutional and tourism structures in the area, which provide guidance and advice to the industry with regard to development, and a marketing structure/ platform for the area on which projects can ride and work in partnership e.g. government agencies, trade consortiums, regional/local tourism organisations.	3.31	3	90%	0.65	44	3.52	4	96%	3.05	3	82%

Table 5.1 Institutional Arrangements

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

There is widespread recognition amongst panellists (90%) of the importance of appropriate institutional structures for tourism. Whilst academics and the public and operational sectors were unanimous in their support, consultants (71%) did not share this view. Respondents in both South Africa and Britain expressed concern with regard to the friction and lack of co-operation perpetuated between the various tiers of government:

The whole problem is that we don't have a unitary authority. District Councils for five years have been involved in tourism, the County Council hasn't. District Councils have been working at their projects but only in their own areas. This isn't good for the whole County and tourism as a whole (British public sector).

Respondents also articulated concern pertaining to the relationship between government and its agencies. In South African provinces the responsibility for tourism development and marketing is hypothetically divided between a government department and its tourism agency a factor, respondents emphasise, that necessitates close cooperation and synergy between these tourism authorities. Findings from the focus group provided evidence that the relationship between government

departments and their agencies is not always positive. A departmental member of the focus group described the prevailing communication gap as a 'huge chasm between development (the department) and marketing (the tourism agency)'. Despite recognising the problem the department appears guilty of perpetuating the status quo. The lack of communication and role incertitude that persists was highlighted by the fact that the departmental member admitted negotiating with a university to conduct research on behalf of the province without reference to the tourism agency in which responsibility for research is vested. This angered the agency official. The perception of government tourism agencies as unproductive was highlighted by the observation that these organisations are generally under funded and consequently ineffective, thus accentuating another bone of contention between agencies and their departments – that of budget.

The problems of relationships, coordination and role incertitude that persist between tourism institutions are not unique to South Africa. In Britain the picture must be expanded to include relevant agencies at European, British national and local level:

So we are looking at a number of different structures and a number of those structures overlap and there aren't clear relationships between them...but they don't actually want to come together to pool their resources and create some sort of synergy. It's very, very frustrating (British academic).

Hall and Jenkins (1995) highlight the importance of suitable institutional arrangements in providing the framework within which tourism will operate. It is, however, emphasised that institutional self-interest results in relationships between organisations that are not always conducive to co-operation and mutual benefit or support (Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Jefferies, 2001). The diverging aims and objectives of different levels of government, departments within government and the multifarious tourism organisations add to the complexity, lack of integration and friction that permeate the tourism arena. Policy that defines both the framework within which rural tourism will operate and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the related tourism institutions, is thus of fundamental importance. It is particularly the tourism officials, public sector tourism structures and statutory tourism agencies, at regional and local levels of government, and the support mechanisms they provide to the rural tourism industry, which have emerged as a

primary concern in this investigation. Closely allied to issues of institutionalisation are those of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Bureaucracy should be eliminated and fast, efficient information and administrative procedures relating to land tenure, permits and licences instigated to boost investor confidence and streamline authorizations for project implementation.	3.21	4	83%	0.91	43	3.57	4	93%	2.79	3	71%

Table 5.2 Bureaucracy

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

The elimination of bureaucracy and streamlining of procedures for the procurement of information, documentation and licences required by investors and project developers were of major concern to the vast majority of South African panellists (93%). To British panellists this was less important (71%) indicating that the problem is perhaps less prevalent in Britain. As a sector it was the consultants (93%) who perceived the elimination of bureaucracy as being of optimal importance. This is understandable since it is consultants who are frequently confronted with bureaucratic constraints in the planning phases of projects.

Respondents in both countries perceived that if rural tourism was to be encouraged, the onus was on government to lend support in ensuring that the unnecessary bureaucracy surrounding planning procedures, licensing laws and all such processes that were seen to inhibit development was removed. It was also alleged that in Britain local planning systems are fraught with bureaucracy. A British academic expressed these regulations as 'hugely bureaucratic and out of date some would argue'. Bureaucracy was also seen to paralyse the public sector:

There is inability to respond at the speed required if it is to impact on commercial activity. (The) foot and mouth crisis is a good example of this. Where an area is subject to job losses, public sector hold talk shops with slow response. Little impact is made on the situation. Often the crisis is past and the damage done before any remedial actions are put into place (British consultant).

The problems of bureaucracy are widespread. As pointed out in Chapter Two, in both Australian and British studies small tourism operators cited the waste of time, financial costs and problems encountered in dealing with bureaucracy as a major frustration (McKercher and Robbins, 1998) and a hindrance to business operations (Thomas et al, 1998). Although Weber (cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 1990:410) believed that the ideal bureaucracy would be 'technically superior' in terms of accuracy, efficiency and expense, he recognised the danger of officials becoming caught in narrow bureaucratic procedures that clouded their ability to relate to the bigger picture. He also acknowledged the likelihood that in times of emergency bureaucracies would be ineffective and unable to take decisions that would allow a crisis to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Regulations and procedures related to land-use are perceived as the victim of bureaucracy.

Land Use Policy and Planning:

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Issues of land ownership, changes in local land use and the related impacts on the ability of the local population to achieve successful projects, should be taken into account.	3.20	3	84%	0.75	43	3.41	4	89%	2.96	3	79%

Table 5.3 Land-Use Policy and Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Eighty-four percent of the Delphi panel considered that land ownership and changes in local land use were important issues. To South Africans (89%) this was particularly relevant. Focus group members were critical of current land-use planning arguing that there was a need for debate and balance to ensure that land-use benefited

local people. Respondents of both countries agreed that the process was caught up in bureaucracy:

Land-use planners do not think in innovative ways. Tourism proposals, which may have great potential, may change existing land uses but deliver greater economic benefit. Any proposal should be considered on its merits and not constrained by bureaucracy before it is fully considered (South African consultant).

As discussed in Chapter Two, South Africa is faced with complex problems engendered by indigenous people's forfeiture of land under the previous dispensation and the proliferation of land claims that followed the demise of the apartheid regime. Respondents claim that there is little consistent advice from government as to how these land claims will be dealt with and opine that the lack of certainty with regard to land ownership is likely to inhibit the development of private/community sector partnerships and private sector investment. Security of land tenure is also considered imperative if foreign investors are to be attracted to South Africa. Uncertainty predominates as to who has authority to negotiate contracts and potential investors fear these will later be annulled by claims of misrepresentation or other personal agendas. The current lack of political leadership around land issues also impinges on the opportunities for rural communities to participate in the development of tourism projects.

In Britain restrictions on land-use generally pertain to different levels of public sector control dependent on the category of land designation. Sharpley (1993), however, contends that the effectiveness of land designation in Britain is eroded by wide-ranging private ownership of land, which as Jenkins and Prin (1998) point out is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer large landowners. It is alleged that although 87 percent of the British countryside is privately owned, access for recreational purposes has always been relatively easy (ibid, 1998). Over 200,000 kilometres of legislated 'public rights of way' span the countryside and local authorities have the competency to enter into agreements with landholders to ensure public access to other privately owned land (Sharpley, 1993). In both Britain and South Africa rural tourism is thus significantly dependant on the public sector in respect of land related policy and use.

Identifying existing and potential attractions and activities, the infrastructure required to support projects and the impacts of tourism in the region is an essential component of the destination planning process. Government policy and planning with regard to infrastructure provision is pivotal to rural tourism development.

Infrastructure Policy and Planning

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Local authorities should be responsible for the provision of the bulk infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage disposal, parking areas, roads etc) necessary for the development of rural tourism projects.	3.22	4	82%	0.92	42	3.29	4	82%	3.13	3	83%
Road signage and road signage policy should be sensibly managed, with both micro and macro level facilities and operators well signposted.	3.17	4	81%	0.88	42	3.57	4	93%	2.71	3	67%

Table 5.4 Infrastructure Policy and Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Eighty-two percent of panellists perceived that the supply of bulk infrastructure was a public sector responsibility. Academics (91%), the public sector (85%) and operators (92%) agreed. Consultants (67%) lacked consensus as to where the responsibility for the provision of bulk infrastructure lay. However, whilst panellists agreed that infrastructure provision was a public sector responsibility, it was also suggested that financing it was not necessarily so. South African panellists (93%) perceived road signage policy and adequate signposting of facilities as optimally important. British panellists (67%) were less supportive. The importance of road signage was unanimously recognised by public sector panellists (100%).

Since rural tourism areas are frequently remote, infrastructure provision is a matter of fundamental concern to project developers and generally requires substantial government investment. Getz and Page (1997) argument that proactive policy should afford priority to infrastructure that serves both the tourist and the needs of the local

community is a critical factor in a country such as South Africa where many rural areas have neither electricity, sewage, nor potable drinking water. However, as has been indicated in Chapter Two, there are many rural parishes in Britain that are equally devoid of infrastructure although this typically relates to transport and other services rather than more basic bulk infrastructure.

Findings are congruent with Williams and Shaw (1991) who argue that it is customary for the public sector to provide the bulk infrastructure necessary for tourism development. However, as Cooper et al (1998) point out public/private partnerships in this regard are not unusual. An approach, which Hunter and Green (1995) contend is potentially more efficient than infrastructure supplied solely by the public sector. The management and promotion of investment, which could include that for infrastructure, is also perceived as a public sector responsibility.

Management and Promotion of Investment

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
The track record of project developers/investors/operators should be taken into account. (For example previous involvement in tourism projects, the efficient use of project funding, support for local suppliers and services).	3.35	3	92%	0.62	48	3.43	3	96%	3.25	3	88%
Rural tourism project developers should be monitored to ensure that they deliver on their promises.	3.37	4	86%	0.72	44	3.50	4	89%	3.22	3	83%
The level and constancy of investment capital attracted (local/national/international) should be ascertained.	3.15	3	85%	0.67	39	3.33	4	89%	2.89	3	79%
The role of public/private partnerships in leveraging investments should be clarified.	3.06	3	83%	0.70	40	3.18	3	86%	2.90	3	80%
Government should make available a range of local/national government incentives for tourism development investors.	2.97	3	75%	0.85	38	3.20	3	85%	2.71	3	63%

Table 5.5 Management and Promotion of Investment

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Ninety-two percent of the panel agreed that the track record of project developers/investors/operators should be taken into account. Panellists across the board (86%) believed that rural tourism project developers should be monitored to ensure that they deliver on their promises. Overall 85% of the panel perceived the importance of ascertaining the level and constancy of investment attracted. Academics were unanimous in this regard while the operational sector, which perhaps consider this as unwarranted scrutiny, were less supportive (73%). Panellists (83%) agreed that clarity with regard to the role of public/private partnerships in leveraging investment was necessary. This was particularly important to the operational sector (92%), which possibly construed this as being to their benefit.

While South Africans (85) supported the concept of a range of government incentives for investment in rural tourism British panellists (63%) perceived this as unimportant.

It is not unusual for government to formulate policy geared to attracting development capital. Investment incentives may take a variety of forms ranging from provision of land to grants, low interest loans, tax holidays and other forms of investor inducements (Hall, 2000; World Tourism Organisation, 1998). However, prior to formulating investment policies government should interrogate the cost and benefits of investment incentives (Mill and Morrison, 1992; Wanhill, 1986). It is further argued that prior to allocating incentives, government should specify that investors meet exact targets in respect of issues such as job creation (Mill and Morrison, 1992). Delivery on these targets should then be monitored, a responsibility that local government, as the only institutions with the authority at project level, would have to undertake. As Ward and Lewis (2002:3) point out 'it is only if an inward investment is really embedded, with a thick web of local linkages and ties, that it can secure a long-term future'. Assuming the leadership role in tourism planning at the destination level is perceived as a fundamental public sector responsibility.

Destination Planning

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Existing projects should not be duplicated unless indicated by sufficient stable or increasing demand. New attractions should be resisted in areas where there is already over capacity.	3.31	4	87%	0.70	45	3.36	4	86%	3.25	3	88%
A comprehensive destination analysis and product audit should be undertaken.	3.24	4	84%	0.81	43	3.50	4	89%	2.91	3	78%
To avoid the dangers of externalisation e.g. the emergence of ugly features in the locality which alienate projects and reduce their value tourism developments should have buffer areas around them with restrictions placed on alien development.	2.92	3	73%	0.84	37	3.26	4	85%	2.54	3	58%
The effect of tourism on affordable housing/local housing demand (second homes, gentrification) should be established.	2.87	3	69%	0.84	36	2.61	3	54%	3.17	3	88%

Table 5.6 Destination Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Eighty-seven percent of the panel believed that existing projects should not be duplicated unless driven by market demand. New projects should also be resisted in areas in which there was already oversupply. South African panellists (89%) accorded the need for a comprehensive destination analysis and product audit particular importance. The operational sector (92%) and consultants (86%) also recorded their support. The public sector, which as the planning authority should take the lead, however viewed the issue as less important (77%). Response from the public sector is, however, contradictory since 88% of public sector panellists perceived that duplication of projects and new developments in areas that suffered over capacity should be resisted. Informed decision-making in this regard is however dependent on the findings of destination analysis and product audits which, as

Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) emphasise, should form the first steps in the planning process.

The following two statements highlight fundamental differences between the environment in which rural tourism in South African and Britain operates. In the first statement appreciably more South African (85%) than British panellists (58%) supported the proclamation of buffer areas as a means of protecting tourism projects against alien development. It is not inconceivable that this difference of opinion arises from the fact that shanties, which develop in proximity to tourism projects in South Africa, are perceived as a deterrent to tourists who feel unsafe or embarrassed when confronted by poverty.

In the second statement the need to assess the effects of tourism and second home ownership on affordable housing and housing demand was perceived as important to British panellists (88%) and insignificant to South Africans (54%). It is striking that whilst 92% of academics recognize the potential impact of tourism on housing, only 43% of consultants acknowledge this factor. The importance of this criterion in Britain can be ascribed to the fact that second home ownership has been found to be as high as 33% in some areas, such as parts of the Lake District, favoured by rural tourists (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). This both reduces availability and escalates prices of housing for local people. Social disruption in the guise of excessive 'incomers' and the outmigration of young people who can no longer afford to live in the area may ensue (Roberts and Hall, 2001:35).

While British panellists did not support the concept of buffer areas, they equally decried alien development that did not blend with the natural character and environment of the rural area and emphasised that 'planning should be driven by the need to retain the character and authenticity of rural regions that created their potential for tourism development in the first place' (British consultant). Panellists from both countries stressed that the formulation of development standards for rural tourism projects require partnership between the planning authority and other rural tourism stakeholders.

Agreement exists in regard to the importance of maintaining the rural ambience (Lane, 1994a; Page and Getz, 1997). Lane argues that 'if rurality in its many manifestations is a unique selling point, then great care must be taken to maintain rurality' (Lane, 1994a:19). It is also argued that development and design standards should be included in tourism and land-use plans and that such standards should be established before any detailed project planning takes place (Inskeep, 1991). 'Many of these standards are incorporated into zoning regulations and design guidelines so that they have a legal basis for application and maintain continuity of a particular development approach in the area' (Inskeep, 1991:303). These arguments underpin the crucial role of the public sector, which is the only institution in which authority is vested, in ensuring that the planning of rural tourism projects and their implementation is appropriate to the area in which they are located.

Respondents were generally sceptical of the public sector's understanding of tourism planning. Across the sectors South African interviewees stressed the importance of incorporating tourism into integrated development plans and claimed that the public sector lacked understanding of the integrated nature of tourism. They further emphasised that it was at local authority level that tourism integration should take place 'local council needs to integrate tourism into their whole structure' (public sector). Public sector respondents, however, recognised that at local and regional level, where planning for rural tourism and its integration into broader development plans should occur, conflict, fragmentation and lack of coordination abounds. Focus group public sector members spoke of 'conflict between policy and private industry'; 'a huge gap in communication between the public and private sector' and 'inter-industry politics and the negative synergy it causes'.

British interviewees argued that integrating tourism into both economic and social development fields was a primary public sector function. An interviewee expressed it in these terms:

The role of the public sector should be to guide the development of rural tourism according to the rural development objectives in terms of the quantity, the style and the scale of development. The public sector should promote, support and guide the development of rural tourism where it fits into broader rural development objectives (British academic).

However, despite the acknowledgement of public sector responsibility in the field of tourism planning doubts were cast in Britain on its competence to fulfil the task:

Decisions must be made whether to encourage new business or improve the quality and marketing of that already existing. Public sector, driven by job creation, take the simplistic view of more business, more jobs, rather than encouraging growth through quality – this is short termism and unlikely to produce sustainable growth (British consultant).

The complexities of planning for tourism in rural areas are exacerbated by the fact that, in both the public and private sectors, resources and expertise for research, planning, marketing and the operation and management of tourism projects is limited. These difficulties are compounded by the heterogeneity of rural tourism supply and demand, the multiplicity of rural attractions and activities and the manifold claims made on the countryside (Page and Getz, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The situational complexity of the planning process is intensified by:

Conflicts of values which cannot be fully resolved by rational discussion and by calculation; the clash of organised pressure groups and the defence of vested interests; and the inevitable confusions that arise from the complex interrelationships between decisions at different levels and at different scales (Hall, 1992:246).

Again it is the public sector, which must assume the leadership role in instituting a collaborative planning process, as outlined in Chapter Two, that is not overshadowed by the conflicting values and interests of rural tourism stakeholders but weighs the benefits and costs of tourism development holistically from economic, sociocultural and environmental perspectives. Significant public sector functions relating to rural tourism are those encompassing the avenues of support it affords tourism operators.

Public Sector Support for Rural Tourism

General Support Functions

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
In order to ensure success, rural tourism should be assisted by active, appropriate, positive public sector/political support at all levels. Support could be training, financial, provision of land/buildings, reduction in service rates etc.	3.47	4	92%	0.70	47	3.68	4	100%	3.22	4	83%

Table 5.7 General Support Functions

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

The need for rural tourism to be assisted by active, appropriate, positive public sector/political support was rated as crucial across the panel (92%). South Africans, consultants and operational sector panellists were unanimous in this regard. The warning was, however, expressed that the public sector's ability to fulfil respondent expectations 'does presuppose a basic and that is that they have all themselves grasped the benefits of tourism as a part of any development/regeneration agenda' (South African operator). Not all members of the public sector believed that it was incumbent on them to support rural tourism. 'The ideal goal would be to have no public sector support. That it's (rural tourism) able to stand by itself and assure its survival and economic and social benefits without public sector support' (British public sector). The imperative of public sector support for rural tourism is, however, documented throughout the literature (for example, Getz and Page, 1997; Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). As Likorish (1991) points out, an extremely important facet of this support is the facilitation of accessible, appropriate training.

The Public Sector Role in Tourism Education, Training and AwarenessTourism Education and Training

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Training establishments should seek to equip local people with the necessary capability to acquire available jobs and participate significantly in rural tourism projects.	3.37	3	96%	0.56	50	3.54	4	100%	3.17	3	92%
Environmental education and protection programmes, which encourage environmental sensitivity and highlight the importance of environmentally sound practices and activities in tourism, should be implemented.	3.34	4	90%	0.72	46	3.38	4	89%	3.29	3	92%
Training establishments should deliver a diverse range of appropriate capacity building, skills training and education programmes	3.08	3	87%	0.59	45	3.18	3	96%	2.96	3	75%

Figure 5.8 Tourism Education and Training

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Overall Delphi panellists saw training as a critical issue. Panellists (96%) perceived building the capability of local people to acquire jobs and participate significantly in rural tourism as a crucial function of training establishments. Consultants and the operational sector were unanimous in their support of this statement. There was strong support across the panel (90%) for the implementation of environmental education and protection programmes. Whilst academics and the operational sector were unanimous in this regard, the public sector (77%), with which responsibility for the protection of the environment rests, was less convinced of its importance. Provision of a diverse, appropriate range of programs and adopting the three pronged approach of capacity building, skills training and education, was highly rated by

South Africans (96%). In Britain, where training is more widely available, panellists were less supportive (75%).

The need for training, which related specifically to the acquisition of business and entrepreneurial skills, received particular emphasis in panellist comments. 'What is important is that entrepreneurial skills are included in all training courses because there may be better prospects in self-employment than in corporate business' (South African academic). British panellists also emphasised the importance of training with a view to fostering entrepreneurial self-reliance as opposed to merely training for employment and called for 'training which concentrates on business skills, including mid/higher skill levels, where tourism-specific issues are bolted on, where the intention is to build an indigenous skills base and encourage local entrepreneurial activity' (British consultant). More specific training needs of rural tourism operators are further discussed in Chapter Seven.

In South Africa, academics intimated that universities are recognising the exigency for business and entrepreneurial training in tourism and that short courses were being developed to cater to these needs. These ranged from courses for farmers diversifying into tourism to those focussing on the identification of resources and analysis of the financial and other requirements for tourism project development. It is significant that these courses have been made possible through university partnerships with the private and public sectors.

Doubts about the applicability of the training offered in South Africa were widespread amongst both panellists and the focus group, with an expressed need for operational 'on the job' training as opposed to theoretical courses. The exigency for flexible programmes, adapted to the needs of the trainees, were particularly recognised in South Africa where the levels of education and lack of skills and capacity to understand the training presented vary considerably dependent on the target audience:

Business training should be fed by a national framework – the best people should put together computer programmes to be delivered to people at local level. Translation of delivery at local level with understanding of local conditions (South African consultant).

In South Africa's widely dispersed rural areas distance, lack of public transport and paucity of funds accentuate the need for local delivery of training. To overcome this constraint focus group members suggested that the onus was on 'the local tourism organisation to take emerging entrepreneurs on board and build their capacity and skills transfer'. Many rural tourism operators, however, themselves lack both business and entrepreneurial skills. Emerging business is further viewed as a potential source of competition. Furthermore, respondents claim that at local government level, where officials are involved in local tourism organisations, public sector capacity is itself most deficient.

Despite the contention that 'operational skills are easily developed' (British consultant), a deficiency in this sphere has also been recognised in Britain. Panellists highlighted problems of access and claimed that training 'can be difficult to implement effectively due to the diverse nature of the rural tourism industry. Micro-businesses have particular difficulty accessing training -time/finances/spatial' (British academic). It was also alleged that it is often difficult to encourage small entrepreneurs to take advantage of any form of training. Respondents, however, agree that it is government who must accept the responsibility for training facilitation. A British academic expressed it this way 'certainly public sector would have a key role in terms of championing particular aspects of education and training'.

These findings are consistent with the literature. Research undertaken amongst small tourism and hospitality firms in Britain (Thomas, 2000) reveals that employer perceptions of operational skills gaps amongst staff range from technical and practical to customer care and communication. Although these findings are not specific to rural tourism they cover the range of small businesses into which most rural tourism projects fall. Researchers stress the importance of training that concentrates on and adapts to the specific needs of targeted trainees (Fawcett, 1996; Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Lynch, 1998). In particular Page and Getz (1997) recognise the specific problems of relevance, quality and access to training in the rural tourism sector, thus confirming the merit of delivery at local level, adapted to local needs and at a level of complexity acceptable to local trainees.

Environmental education and an understanding of the potentially negative impacts of rural tourism projects and their related activities are of particular importance to rural tourism in view of the fact that the environment itself constitutes a critical component of the attractions and activities sought by the rural tourist (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Simpson and Wall (1999:235) extend the exigency for environmental education to communities claiming that 'most writers agree that environmental education for the local populations is one of the most important components that should be included as part of the SIA (Social Impact Assessment) process'.

The delivery of tourism education and training programs is not the direct function of government. There is, however, agreement that facilitating such training is a public sector responsibility (Echtner, 1995; World Tourism Organisation, 1998). Inskeep (1991) argues that it is incumbent upon government, through policy formulation, to ensure that the training programs offered are of adequate standard and appropriate to the needs of the industry. Allied to the problems of appropriate training is the need for the development of higher levels of tourism awareness.

Tourism Awareness

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Host communities should be realistic in their expectations of the contribution, benefits and disbenefits (economic and other) that tourism investment brings to the community.	3.44	4	87%	0.73	45	3.57	4	86%	3.29	3	88%
An appropriate structure should be established to facilitate the participation of host communities in an integrated tourism awareness programme which generates understanding of the tourism development process and the broader tourism industry.	3.33	4	83%	0.76	43	3.46	4	86%	3.17	3	79%
Rural tourism product owners, especially new operators and service providers, should be exposed to the broader tourism industry thereby engendering an understanding of its operations.	3.27	4	77%	0.82	40	3.46	4	86%	3.04	4	67%

Figure 5.9 Tourism Awareness

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Tourism awareness programmes that facilitate an understanding amongst host communities of the broader tourism industry and its operation are considered important across the Delphi panel (83%). Public sector panellists (92%) perceived this as particularly significant. Panellists across the board (87%) also recognised the importance of fostering realistic expectations of the potential benefits and disbenefits that tourism brings to a community. Exposure of rural tourism product and service providers to the broader tourism industry was less important to British panellists (67%) than South Africans (86%). The public sector (85%) and consultants (80%) were in agreement with the statement. Academics (67%) generally were not.

Until 1994 the tourism industry in South Africa was legally restricted to one small sector of the population. Indigenous rural communities thus have marginal knowledge or understanding of tourism. This point was well articulated by an interviewee who stated 'they don't understand. They've never even heard of (or) been able to travel'. Members of the focus group recognised this dilemma stressing the urgency to 'educate (the) community to understand tourism so they can take educated decisions'. The 'need for people to be tourists themselves in order to understand tourism and tourists' was also highlighted. South African consultants interviewed endorsed the exigency of developing awareness and understanding of tourism both amongst communities and those already employed in the rural tourism industry.

Although not as absolute, lack of understanding and unrealistic expectations of rural tourism also prevails in Britain. This was well expressed by a public sector interviewee who claimed:

The aspiration of anybody entering tourism is; it's something we can do. They have no idea what it really means, they don't even understand it's the largest industry in the world and really it's very business-oriented. That's the problem. Tourism being seen by lots of businesses that are failing in other areas as the answer, as can provide everything.

In England, The Countryside Agency (2002) has recognised the need for tourism awareness programmes perceiving this as vital in helping communities understand both the potential rewards and the negative impacts that tourism will generate. Numerous authors similarly acknowledge the value of such programs as a means of generating the understanding required to enable local residents to participate meaningfully in participatory planning, decision-making and delivery of tourism in their communities (Inskeep, 1994; Laws, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Timothy, 2002). In particular Murphy (1988) and Timothy (2002) recognise that whilst the population of developed countries is likely to have an understanding of tourism from their own experiences, few residents of less-developed countries will have personal experience of being a tourist.

Lack of British and academic support for the concept of tourism awareness programmes for tourism operators is contradictory. Firstly, British respondents

acknowledge the lack of industry experience amongst this sector. Secondly, the literature recognises that lack of experience and understanding of tourism industry practice is a common feature amongst operators (Getz and Page, 1997; McKercher and Robbins, 1998).

The role of the public sector in the delivery of tourism awareness programmes is problematic. Timothy (2000) contends that government officials have numerous means, such as media campaigns or public meetings, through which to develop tourism awareness amongst the general population. What he fails to take into account is that in many less-developed regions, most particularly in more remote rural areas, tourism officials are themselves ill equipped to understand the complexities of tourism and are frequently the origin of the unrealistic expectations that are fostered amongst communities. This problem was bluntly expressed in the focus group through the statement 'government doesn't know what tourism means'.

Other Support Services - The Public Sector Role

Amongst a variety of public sector support services to the rural tourism sector, those perceived by respondents as most valuable include business mentoring, funding, marketing and information provision. The identified deficiencies in tourism and business skills, further discussed in Chapter Seven, amongst rural tourism operators highlights the importance of business mentoring.

Mentoring Support

	SA/ UK x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	UK x	M	%
There should be business mentoring support available to projects, and/or their ancillary entrepreneurial opportunities, if this is required.	3.12	3	79%	0.73	41	3.32	4	86%	2.88	3	71%

Table 5.10 Mentoring of Rural Tourism Projects

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

South African panellists (86%) and the academic sector (92%) perceived it as important that business mentoring should be available to projects requiring it. Paradoxically the operational sector (69%) accorded this the least weight.

Public sector members of the focus group demonstrated uncertainty as regards the concept of mentorship and where responsibility for this should lie. Attempts were made to shift the responsibility to the private sector alleging that it was incumbent upon them to provide mentorship between big and small and existing and new projects. Mentorship in South Africa is particularly problematic since the public sector demonstrably does not have the capacity to mentor and private sector, many of which are small product owners struggling to stay afloat, does not have the benevolence. The proposal that funding agents should provide a mentoring and monitoring service so that difficulties could be identified at an early stage has merit in its potential to augment business and management skills. Funding agents, however, lack the tourism specific knowledge desperately needed by many small rural tourism operators. Furthermore many of the rural tourism projects in need of mentoring are privately funded. It was also suggested that universities could play a mentoring role by introducing this service as a follow-up for entrepreneurs who had undergone training.

A thought-provoking comment on this topic was the emphasis that mentorship 'must include teaching independence' (South African operator). In fostering capacity to embark on independent decision-making and self-reliance mentorship must thus respond to the real needs of the rural tourism operator as opposed to a perceived need determined by the mentor. Neglecting to foster self-reliance can and does lead to the failure of rural tourism projects (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003). This of course implies that mentors must themselves have a working understanding of rural tourism.

The importance of mentors being conversant with the intricacies of the rural tourism sector was also emphasised in Britain. In Wales, for example, contracts previously issued to tourism specialists to mentor and assist existing or start-up businesses were now reportedly:

Only issued to non-specialists with generic skills and very tenuous knowledge in tourism. Mentors to small tourism businesses need appreciation of trends, where industry is going, where likely to go, understanding of mistakes made. Such knowledge is invaluable to the development of a business (British consultant).

Unlike South Africa, mentorship in Britain is readily available. For example, a public sector official highlighted that in his region six tourism business advisers had been employed 'who will go out across the whole region advising tourism businesses of how to become better at business...they are talking something like £6,000,000 put into these six individuals and the resource centre'. Nonetheless, British interviewees point out that despite the availability of mentoring services it is often difficult to encourage small rural tourism entrepreneurs to take advantage of them notwithstanding the general dearth of business skills in the sector. The fact that rural tourism operators do not appear to recognise their need of mentorship thus explains the lack of operational sector support for this criterion, a finding that confirms Thomas et al's (1998) argument that small tourism and hospitality operators do not perceive a need for business assistance.

The perception amongst respondents that government, at both regional and local level, is deficient in understanding the primary concepts of rural tourism was further elucidated in findings with regard to public sector support in the fields of funding, marketing and information provision, all of which are generally perceived as inefficient and inadequate. Foremost amongst areas identified by respondents in which rural tourism projects require public sector support is the acquisition of funding.

Funding For Entrepreneurial Ventures in Rural Tourism

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
The banking sector should view entrepreneurial tourism projects positively enabling individual entrepreneurs to access start-up funding.	3.14	3	82%	0.86	41	3.21	4	86%	3.05	3	77%

Table 5.11 Funding For Entrepreneurial Ventures in Rural Tourism

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Overall panellists (82%) judged the need for the banking sector to view entrepreneurial projects more positively with regard to access to funding as important. However, it was the operational sector (100%) to which this represented a burning issue. To the academic sector (73%) it was less important.

Members of the focus group highlighted the difficulty in procuring finance but pointed out that 'banks need to have a dramatic paradigm shift if they are ever to view entrepreneurial tourism projects positively'. Some British academic interviewees suggested that banks in rural areas might be more sympathetic towards rural tourism projects and would be good places to seek business advice. Others perceived the economic fragility of rural tourism projects as the crux of financial institution reluctance to assisting with funding:

Rural tourism is perhaps more prone to be made up of a large number of very small, micro businesses which, arguably, need more start-up supports and they may be in relatively isolated areas, or areas which don't receive support from more formalised systems set up by financial institutions. They may be seen as more vulnerable to bankruptcy and therefore need more support in that way (British academic).

Amongst South African respondents funding was a burning issue. What was noteworthy in the focus group was the concession that although government funding for projects was available, the public sector lacked the capacity to utilise this effectively. This raised the question whether, since local government lacked implementation capacity, money should be made available to local entrepreneurs

allowing the private sector to be the implementers of government-funded projects. The lack of public sector capacity to optimally manage funding was also identified in Britain where it was claimed that potential was being lost through divergence of resources into public sector programmes. A British consultant phrased it this way 'I am increasingly concerned about the disproportionate resources awarded to the public sector. Inefficient use is made of these resources. Much more could be done to stimulate entrepreneurship'. The allegation of inefficient use of resources was borne out by the admission that a public funded project had 'massive revenue problems. Probably the core of any money we get will have to try to sort these problems out. It's (the funded project) just not feasible' (British public sector).

A senior public sector member of the focus group claimed that there was 'a clear cycle and criteria for funding' for small tourism entrepreneurs. This antagonised an operator who had, to no avail, desperately sought funding for a small community-based project that ultimately failed. South African interviewees, however, refuted this statement claiming that entrepreneurs found difficulty in accessing funding because they often submitted applications to the wrong source due to ignorance of the respective terms of reference and selection criteria, thus highlighting the public sector's ineptitude in fulfilling their facilitatory role. The existence of funding is in itself of little value if the details of various schemes available are not communicated and easily accessible to aspiring rural tourism operators. The problem was phrased in these terms:

New, small operators are often not aware of funding schemes. Often when they attempt to access these schemes they are frustrated by the detail required and the approval processes. There are few schemes that are really well suited and tailored to the needs of small emerging tourism operators (South African public sector).

British interviewees also articulated the difficulties in accessing funding to get rural tourism projects off the ground and generally perceived assistance in this regard as an important public sector support mechanism. As in South Africa, respondents allege that prospective operators are frustrated by lack of information and the detail required in submitting an application for funding:

The biggest problem we have in the county is that there are lots of project ideas but...they all need 100% money. The big issue is being able to access additional funding, which only the local authority can. Accessing regional and European funding. One of the things that private sector struggles with and needs support with (British public sector).

European Union grants are available for small and medium tourism enterprises but are subject to strict project appraisal with particular stress on economic criteria (Wanhill, 2000). In some areas, for example Wales, public sector agencies are, however, fulfilling a valuable role in supporting new projects (Wales Tourist Board, 2001). As discussed in Chapter Two, the difficulties of access to funding for new rural tourism operators is a wide-spread phenomenon compounded by the small-scale of proposed projects, the constraints of seasonality, a deficiency in business and financial skills and the lack of collateral against which to acquire loans. All factors that increase the reluctance of mainstream financial institutions to assist in funding what are perceived as high-risk enterprises (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page and Getz, 1997). Also important to rural tourism operators is public sector support in the realm of marketing.

Public Sector Marketing Support

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
There should be good public sector marketing support to boost investor confidence.	3.02	3	78%	0.74	39	3.39	3	96%	2.55	3	55%

Table 5.12 Public Sector Marketing Support

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the importance of marketing and the market relatedness of projects was a dominant issue throughout the research yet only one potential criterion pertaining to public sector marketing received any support from panellists. South African panellists (96%) agreed that good public sector marketing support was important in boosting investor confidence as opposed to British panellists who viewed this as insignificant (55%). This criterion was particularly supported by the operational sector (92%).

The reasons for panellist lack of support of public sector marketing initiatives were elucidated in both panellist comments and interviews. Consultants from both South Africa and Britain alleged that reliance on public sector marketing held the danger of creating a culture of dependence and asserted that the less this dependence the more successful projects were likely to be. In South Africa the focus group stressed that accessing markets is a key constraint faced by emerging tourism projects, particularly those of the previously marginalized rural sector where inability to sustain a steady flow of visitors is frequently cited as the primary reason for project failure. In these circumstances public sector marketing support was deemed crucial. Although it was claimed that subsidies were available to assist entrepreneurs in their marketing endeavours, operators alleged that accessing these subsidies was not easy.

That British respondents felt little confidence in the value of public sector marketing initiatives was borne out in interviews in which it was alleged that there was a very strong debate over the role of public agencies in promoting and supporting rural tourism. It was claimed that destination marketing has comparatively little effect on small businesses, does not produce returns that justify the cost of advertising or participating in destination marketing material and that small operators find that most business is not coming from this quarter. Despite the criticism British interviewees asserted that providing the marketing support needed by the industry was clearly a very important public sector responsibility. This role was perceived to extend beyond marketing rural tourism to also co-ordinating the various agencies undertaking their own marketing initiatives. The lack of confidence expressed by respondents in public sector marketing for rural tourism, however, seemed justified when a British public sector marketing agency official professed 'I don't know what's meant by rural tourism' and added that he saw rural tourism merely as a marketing tool, which helps promote the image of the country:

Because one uses an image doesn't mean to say that people will actually go there. So you see lots of people going mountain biking and climbing mountains. People don't actually do these things but they like to think they can do them.

A report by Access Economics (cited in Hall, 2000:139) states unequivocally that 'marketing of inbound tourism in large measure has the market failure and public good characteristics that indicate private sector under-provision and justify public sector funding of marketing activity'. Since all sectors of the tourism industry reap the benefits of public sector destination marketing programmes, Pearce (1992:8) categorises such promotion as a 'public good'. Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) agree that the public sector should provide the generic marketing platform on which rural tourism projects and organisations can ride and work in partnership. The coordination of marketing programmes is cardinal given that the proliferation of promotional agencies at all levels of the public sector creates a fertile breeding ground for overlaps and conflict pertaining to the degree of exposure and the identity of a rural area projected by an agency at a higher level (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Jefferies, (2001:238), previously a member of the British Tourist Authority, affirms that 'a potential source of conflict is the perceived overlapping of budgets and duplication of efforts' and acknowledges that National Tourism Organisations have been unsuccessful in coordinating the activities of the various marketing agencies. Market research and information provision are also key government responsibilities (Hall, 2000).

Public Sector Information Provision

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Mechanisms should be put in place to feed back information relating to market research and tourism trends to planners and policy makers.	3.27	4	83%	0.74	43	3.36	4	89%	3.17	4	75%

Table 5.13 Public Sector Information Provision

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD= Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the statement 3 or 4

Eighty-three percent of the panel, recognizing that the provision of 'bottom-up' information was as important as that flowing 'top-down', supported the concept of a mechanism through which to feedback information to the public sector. This was less

important to British (75%) than to South African (89%) panellists. The public sector (77%) that should rate this highly was the least supportive of this criterion.

Information provision formed a substantial topic in both the focus group and interviews. Public sector focus group members acknowledged the need for someone with the 'strings to pull it all together' and provide information, advice and guidance, particularly to emerging entrepreneurs. The lack of specialist advice and information was a recurrent theme amongst South African respondents. There was also consensus that the lack of base marketing information and research was a key constraint to the rural tourism sector. Interviewees recognized that the lack of marketing advice and understanding of market segments resulted in projects that were often supply-led.

South African interviewees identified a range of public sector information-related responsibilities but differed as to the level at which the responsibility should rest. The majority of interviewees regarded information provision as the responsibility of local authorities and both focus group members and interviewees stressed that building the capacity of local authority officials to fulfil this task was imperative. Other respondents argued that public sector tourism agencies should take up the mantle of providing both market research and information and should assist aspiring operators with business plans. From respondent comments there is, however, evidence that in the South African context the underlying problem is lack of public sector capacity to assume this responsibility.

United Kingdom interviewees identified a plethora of institutions from which information was available. These institutions were said to provide general business information and possible assistance in accessing funds. The majority of British interviewees mentioned local authorities. However, reservations were expressed as to whether those seeking information would be able to procure it at this source 'whether they get all the information that they'd probably need is another question. They probably would as long as they can find the right people. The trouble is, particularly at the local authority, actually knowing who to talk to' (British academic). Probing of other interviewees as to whether an operator would be able to procure all the information he/she needed at one venue elicited similar responses indicating that the organisation and co-ordination of information is problematic. 'If you asked someone

who is actually trying to do it, they'd probably say it's confusing as to where they would go (British academic).

Whilst Britain, unlike South Africa, has abundant information providers accessing the information appears to present difficulties. 'The industry has a lot of small players and the information and intelligence is very fragmented. There is a role somewhere for creating some kind of rural tourism network where good practice and information can be collated, disseminated and promoted' (British public sector). The lack of tourism specific information was also perceived as a constraint 'although they can give generic advice, getting specific tourism advice is, has been for a very long time and still is, quite a key problem' (British academic). These findings are substantiated by the allegation of The Rural Affairs Forum for England Tourism Sub-Group (2002) that information provision in rural tourism has long been problematic.

Not all respondents were sympathetic 'rural people want spoonfed, they don't think for themselves. They want the public sector to supply information rather than them trying to work on ideas'. When asked whether he collected rural tourism statistics this British public sector agency interviewee replied:

No, because I can't define what rural tourism is. Is it someone who's stationed in (the city) overnight that goes cycling in the countryside and comes back to (the city)? Is that rural tourism? Or is that urban-based tourism making use of rural facilities? I find it very difficult to collect statistics on rural tourism because I think it's difficult to define.

Although this interviewee's attitude to rural tourism was generally negative his dilemma is valid. The difficulties of defining rural tourism and the lack of universal agreement on its composition have been discussed in Chapter One. Roberts and Hall (2001) agree that the extrapolation of accurate rural tourism data is difficult. The problem is thus self-perpetuating. Collecting meaningful rural tourism statistics is problematic because there is no accepted definition of the sector. Yet, in order to prepare the required feasibility studies to access funding, prospective rural operators need statistical information.

The prospect of a productive marriage between universities and the tourism industry assumed increasing significance as the research progressed. Academics of both countries recognized this potential. A South African academic expressed it as the 'need for a central parking garage for tourism – market intelligence, linkages, finance access and the potential for universities to become one-stop shops providing information and mentorship'. British respondents concurred. 'We get a lot of information coming in all the time about rural tourism and I think universities have got a big role to play in disseminating that information. Perhaps becoming places where data is collected and analysed and put in a meaningful fashion and helping individuals just to put their own ideas into practice by accessing funding as well' (British academic).

The Public Sector - Principal Research Findings

Three significant themes have emerged from analysis of the research findings in this area. Firstly, despite the criticisms levied for perceived lack of capacity, efficiency and effectivity, the private sector acknowledge the role of the public sector in guiding and supporting the development of a rural tourism sector that achieves government objectives in stimulating the rural economy and generating employment. The role of the public sector is perceived as most compelling at local government level where envisaged responsibilities include the architecture of rural tourism policy and plans and ensuring the implementation of what is agreed in the planning process. Managing rural tourism in order to ensure appropriate development that serves both the needs of local communities and investors is equally important. The valuable role of local authorities in the coordination of rural tourism development and in ensuring cooperation and networking between the public sector, development agencies and individual entrepreneurs was also emphasised. There is thus evidence that recognition by local authorities of their leadership role in the integrated planning and management of rural tourism is crucial if its diverse elements are to be developed, integrated, managed and protected to the benefit of all its stakeholders. Middleton and Hawkins (1998:39) unequivocally agree:

The world's best hope of securing sustainability in travel and tourism lies not with national authorities, but with the competence and authority vested in local government responsible for specific tourism destinations, working in partnership with private sector business.

The second theme is the emerging appreciation, by both academics and non-academics, of the invaluable role that universities can play as a central depot through which rural tourism stakeholders could access information, research, mentorship, advice and training. Scholars (Cooper, 2002; Jenkins, 1999) have recognised the historical divide that has existed between academics and the tourism industry. Nonetheless, the Australian Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism has developed an innovative partnership between the tourism industry, universities and the government. Based on respondent input similar partnerships in South Africa and Britain should not be far behind. These will not be without their pitfalls. De Lacey and Boyd (2000:117) posit that success depends on 'overcoming the two cultures; between industry and researchers; between applied and theoretical; between different research disciplines; between different industry sectors; between different geographical regions; between global and local; between competing ideologies'. Findings from this research indicate that there are undoubtedly bridges to be built in reconciling the diverse opinions of academics and practitioners. Any moves in this direction must however be viewed as positive both from the perspective of the benefits to the industry and to universities many of whom are struggling with issues of change and innovation.

The third theme to emerge from the findings is the growing recognition of the benefits of partnership amongst rural tourism stakeholders. Delphi panellists, predominantly the operational sector, stressed the need for stakeholder partnerships in the planning process and the formulation of standards. Others focused on the importance of partnerships in the development of community-based rural tourism. In South Africa, focus group members were in consensus that partnership between the public and private sectors and local communities was the key to successful rural tourism development. Consultant and academic interviewees spoke of training and research partnerships between business and government and the need for incentives to encourage community/ public/ private partnerships. It was also reported that in

Britain increasing numbers of local partnerships were being set up for economic development.

Butler (1993) refers to the fragmented, frequently random, ad hoc character of tourism development. Rural tourism suppliers and stakeholders are heterogeneous. A plethora of organisations emanates from the public, private and voluntary sectors. There is a multifarious array of rural tourism attractions and activities. Together they form a complex mosaic each piece of which has an interest in the planning, development and management of rural tourism. The complexity is compounded by the potential for conflict between those who favour the development of tourism in rural areas and those to whom the peace, quiet and conservation of the rural environment is intrinsic (Getz and Jamal, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Small wonder that there is increasing appreciation that the only viable route for areas seeking to develop rural tourism is through 'a broader, integrated strategy, which involves a variety of public and private sector organisations within a recognised partnership' (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997:127). In both South Africa and Britain government has recognized the imperative of partnership. 'Tourism development is dependent on the establishment of cooperation and close partnerships among key stakeholders' (Government of South Africa, 1996:23). In Britain, 'Tomorrow's Tourism' strategy similarly states that government will 'encourage tourism management partnerships between local authorities, tourism operators and local communities' (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999:53).

Concluding Points

The aim of this chapter was to establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism. In general South African panellists perceived a greater need of support for the rural tourism sector and thus considered most public sector issues as more significant than did their British counterparts. Despite this many of the problems, concerns and frustrations that emerged throughout the research were similar. Lack of business and financial know-how combined with a dearth of marketing and management skills and difficulties of access to funding amongst small operators emerged as primary constraints. In combination with the perceived public sector lack of tourism understanding and

expertise, these constraints impose severe limitations on the long-term sustainability of rural tourism projects.

Both acknowledgement of and disenchantment with the role played by the public sector was prevalent across the board. Evidence from the Delphi Survey, and findings from the focus group and interviews, suggests inconsistency in public sector responses and uncertainty with regard to their specific responsibilities. Based on the expectations of respondents the public sector is called upon to fulfil a multiplicity of roles if rural tourism in both South Africa and Britain is to achieve government objectives. This makes it incumbent upon those in authority to ensure that the skills, knowledge and tourism understanding of tourism development officers at the various levels of government, and those who serve in the diverse statutory tourism structures, are supported by intensive training and capacity building. In the interest of co-ordination, efficiency and accountability, rationalisation of the responsibilities of the multifarious public sector tourism structures and agencies is also imperative.

Respondents perceive the public sector as 'leader', 'strategist', 'mentor', 'architect', 'builder', 'co-ordinator', 'champion' and 'partner' in their endeavour to build the rural tourism sector. Grappling with the problems of uplifting the quality, viability and communal benefit of rural tourism projects is a futile exercise if the facilitatory platform of rational policy, planning, regulation, and support conducive to the sustainability of the sector, is not in place. Above all, respondent data suggests that local authorities must be 'the enabler' of a successful rural tourism sector that diversifies the local economy and generates the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, the need of which are generally the rationale for public sector promotion of rural tourism in the first place.

The following chapter suggests an index of criteria, developed by respondents, against which the impacts of rural tourism projects on the host community can be evaluated. It also establishes the links between these criteria and related concepts expounded in the literature.

CHAPTER SIX

AN INDEX OF CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS: THE MACRO ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses those criteria, developed by respondents, which pertain to ensuring that the benefits of rural tourism projects on the macro environment of the host location are maximised and their detrimental impacts minimised. Criteria in this chapter are consolidated into three themes. The first theme encompasses the sociocultural impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment. This is followed in the second theme by criteria in relation to the wider socioeconomic impacts of projects on their host environment. Finally, the third theme relates to the relationship between rural tourism projects and the physical environment in which they are located. There are some suggested criteria that overlap the themes in which findings are presented (for example, criteria relating to the type and scale of tourism overlap social, economic and environmental themes). Such criteria are discussed within the first (sociocultural) theme in which findings are presented. Where criteria overlap the socio-economic and environmental themes they are presented within the socio-economic theme.

First, results of the Delphi Survey are presented. These are followed by the findings derived from analysis of Delphi panellist comments, the focus group held in South Africa in October 2002 and the seventeen semi-structured interviews, conducted in Britain and South Africa between October 2002 and April 2003. Criteria are based on a consensus threshold of 87% amongst either British or South African panellists in the Delphi Survey. Where direct quotes are used as a means of giving voice to respondents in their own terms, the originating country and sector of the respondent is shown in brackets. The presentation of results commences with an overview of sectoral ratings of the proposed sociocultural criteria.

Sociocultural Criteria

South Africans tended to be both more supportive and vociferous than British respondents in relation to sociocultural issues. However, only in one criterion, which pertained to the introduction of cultural awareness programmes for tourists, did the difference between panellists of the two countries exceed 15%. Of the four sectors (academic, public sector, consultants and operational sector) from which respondents emanated, academics were most supportive of the criteria (Appendix 10). Table 6.1 reflects the percentage of the sociocultural criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
78%	44%	30%	56%

Table 6.1 Percentage of sociocultural criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

It can be argued that the public sector's lack of understanding of rural tourism, highlighted in Chapter Five, has again manifested itself in these findings. Lowest overall support emanated from the consultants whose commercially oriented stance was well summed up by a British panellist:

There is tension between the politically correct and the degree to which politically correct actions can be realistically integrated into projects. The bias towards politically correct is likely to be most pronounced in those from the public sector and those concerned with community development. The bias away is likely more apparent the more commercially biased the respondent.

Respondents recognised the complexities inherent in the sociocultural impacts of rural tourism. 'The sections on participation and sociocultural issues were more difficult to answer. This is partly because the fields are less well understood, yet this is where there is the greatest potential for improvement' (South African consultant). An increased emphasis and changing shift in attitude towards the importance of sociocultural impacts is, however, gaining ground. A British academic expressed it this way 'perhaps the emphasis is moving now more towards, not so much the economic impacts but social and cultural impacts on rural areas. So there'll certainly need to be criteria about the negative and positive impacts on local communities'. The first criterion in the sociocultural theme relates to ethical project development.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED SOCIOCULTURAL CRITERIA

Criterion of Ethical Project Development

	SA/ BR X	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be developed with suitable negotiated frameworks and fair agreements entered into between developers, landowners and local communities to facilitate project development.	3.57	4	96%	0.57	49	3.68	4	96%	3.43	3	96%

Table 6.2 Criterion of Ethical Project Development

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of the Delphi panel were in accord that projects should be ethical and that negotiating frameworks and agreements entered into should be suitable and fair. In South Africa public sector panellists allege that rural communities are frequently robbed of opportunity by unscrupulous developers. It is not uncommon that poor people, who commonly have little idea of how to evaluate the reciprocal benefits and costs in agreements entered into with prospective project developers, are the victims of exploitation. Redclift (1992:395) argues that 'poor people often have no choice but to choose immediate economic benefits at the expense of the long term sustainability of their livelihoods' a factor that leaves them extremely vulnerable to approaches by unethical project developers. The importance of transparent, honest facilitation processes gives rise to the following criterion.

Criterion of Transparency

	SA/ BR X	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
There should be a transparent facilitation process amongst stakeholder groups/ local communities in order to deal with power relationships between stakeholders and resolve issues of conflict.	3.15	3	82%	0.72	40	3.24	4	77%	3.04	3	87%

Table 6.3 Criterion of Transparency

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-seven percent of British panellists recognised the need for transparent facilitation processes amongst project stakeholders in order to resolve issues of power and conflict as opposed to 77% of South Africans. Support amongst the different sectors showed significant variances. Whilst academics were in consensus in their support of the criterion, only 67% of the operational sector panellists echoed this view.

South African respondents highlighted the complexities inherent in community relationships and claimed that 'working with a community is hugely difficult because of all the different interests and agendas' (South Africa operator). Focus group members suggested that it was the people perceived to be in power in a community who should participate in tourism processes although it was acknowledged that these leaders were sometimes the inhibitors of development. For example, in South Africa Fowkes and Jonsson (1994: 6) discovered that facilitatory processes were constrained as people were 'reluctant to be seen disagreeing with ideas and positions of senior members of the community' who are the traditional decision-makers. Conversely, Harper (1997:149) found that in Cumbria the path to success lay in identifying, understanding, listening to and working with opinion leaders in the community.

Panellist opinions on how to deal with power relationships and personal agendas differ. While some opine that consultation should take place through a community

tourism forum others argue that 'implementing a project which a steering committee thinks is necessary often fails because the general community does not want it and therefore does not support it' (South African public sector). British respondents agreed that the starting point should be to ascertain whether communities actually want involvement in tourism, which many do not.

An explanation for the importance of facilitation is offered by Scheyvens (1999) who argues that processes through which communities are afforded the opportunity to raise questions, voice concerns and participate in decision-making relating to tourism in their community, engender 'political empowerment'. Madrigal (1994), however, argues that it is not uncommon that individuals who will benefit from the acceptance of a specific development proposal also dominate communities. This situation is not limited to less-developed countries. Fitton (1996), for example, alleges that in many areas of the developed world democratic decision-making in relation to tourism also does not extend to communities.

Criterion of Communication

	SA/ BR X	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
There should be effective communication and liaison between stakeholder groups/ local communities to ensure understanding of key messages and remove barriers.	3.35	3	94%	0.59	49	3.39	4	89%	3.29	3	100%

Table 6.4 Criterion of Communication

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Effective communication and liaison between all stakeholder groups, including local communities, was perceived as extremely important to the entire panel (94%) with British panellists in consensus in this regard. Members of the focus group perceived the lack of tourism awareness amongst rural communities as a significant constraint to their ability to understand key communications and take informed decisions with regard to tourism. It was also alleged that the naiveté of rural

communities and their difficulty in understanding and interpreting communication from prospective developers left them vulnerable to exploitation. Both focus group and interviewees stressed that despite these inadequacies South African rural communities disliked patronisation, a feeling that they were being talked down to, by those with whom they were communicating. It was also emphasised that there was a need for realism in assessing the capacity of communities to engage:

Lighting a fire in somebody you've got to be very careful that the fire doesn't burn you and them at the same time. How you take people with you requires a great deal of realism, mixed with quite a bit of cynicism in the sense of being able to look at where skills are lacking, where the vision may be lacking. You've got to be absolutely realistic about where people are and where they need to be within just understanding how tourism works (South African operator).

Nonetheless, panellists agreed that before projects were implemented there should be consultation with the local community who, based on sound information, should have the power to affect a decision on whether a proposed project should go ahead.

Public sector responsibility for spreading tourism awareness and their lack of capacity to do so was discussed in Chapter Five. This inadequacy frustrates constructive communication at community level in less-developed countries, such as South Africa (Tosun, 2000). However, based on experience in Canada, Jamal and Getz (2000) allege that the quantity and extent of information presented can be confusing to participants even in developed countries. Gray's (1985) argument that capacity is an integral requirement of legitimate participation in tourism is underpinned by Daniels and Walker (1996:80) who argue that 'effective public participation must be more than simply encouraging...good communication. It depends on communication competence'. Ensuring that expectations communicated are realistic is equally imperative.

Criterion of Expectations

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Stakeholders should have overall clarity and understanding of the aims, goals and rewards of projects and their intended impacts, without raising unrealistic expectations.	3.54	4	94%	0.73	49	3.71	4	96%	3.33	4	92%

Table 6.5 Criterion of Expectations

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The need for clarity and realism with regard to the aims, goals, rewards and potential impacts of projects was perceived as crucial by 94% of Delphi panellists. South African interviewees, however, emphasised that communities had great difficulty both in visualising projects and in gaining a realistic understanding of the benefits and potential negative impacts that follow in the wake of tourism. Interviewees sounded the warning that poor rural communities are likely to have unrealistically high expectations of tourism and that developers should be aware of the difficulties of balancing the creation of expectations with opportunities for equitable beneficiation. Interviewees further emphasised that both communities and prospective entrepreneurs need to understand that a tourism venture will only succeed if it is treated as a business and warned that expectations of delivery were too high and that an understanding of the time frame required for projects to begin showing returns was essential.

British support of the need for understanding of the aims, goals and rewards of projects was underpinned by interviewee intimation that unrealistic expectations of tourism are also experienced in Britain. A public sector interviewee phrased it this way 'that (unrealistic expectation) is very much the problem I think, that comes right down to tourism being seen as the answer, as can provide, can provide everything and then it doesn't'. A study by the Countryside Agency (2002) confirms that in undertaking projects that seek to increase the benefits of tourism to communities it is essential that the objectives set are clear and realistic lest people become disappointed and lose motivation. These findings are congruent with Hall

and Jenkins (1998) allegation that both the public and private sectors are prone to regard tourism as the easy option in rural areas. They further argue that unrealistic expectations of rural tourism's economic benefits and lack of understanding and management of its negative impacts may combine to minimise its benefits. The following criteria pertain to the compatibility of rural tourism projects with the development needs of host communities.

Criteria of Compatibility

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be compatible with the resources and quality of the host location, engendering resident 'pride-in-place' and leading to improved maintenance of settlements.	3.31	4	88%	0.73	45	3.25	4	82%	3.39	3	96
Projects should be appropriate to the development needs of the community.	3.31	3	88%	0.68	45	3.14	3	82%	3.52	4	96
The level of projects potential contribution to the achievement of long-term plans/ambitions for the host location should be considered.	3.10	3	81%	0.75	42	3.14	4	75%	3.04	3	88

Table 6.6 Criteria of Compatibility

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The compatibility of projects with the resources and quality of the host location (88%) and their appropriateness to the development needs of the community (88%) were highly rated across the panel. Consultants (71%) perceived the appropriateness of projects to the development needs of the community as less important. Although no consultant offered an explanation for the lower rating, judging by the sector's overall contribution to the study it can be deduced that consultants generally take a business rather than a socially oriented perspective to tourism project development. The level of projects potential contribution to the achievement of long-term plans of

the host location was well supported by British panellists (88%) but less so by South Africans (75%). Whilst academics were in consensus in this regard, consultants considered it less significant (57%).

Uncertainty with regard to the determination of a community's needs and the appropriateness of rural tourism projects was highlighted by public sector members of the focus group who queried who should determine a community's needs and whose estimation of these needs should prevail – those of the community or those of the public sector. Other focus group members were adamant that the community should agree with the type of tourism projects developed. Interviewees affirmed that projects should add value to the development goals of the broader community and that the 'script for the area should be developed by key stakeholders; everyone involved in and impacted by tourism. Shared vision, values and principles agreed to among stakeholders at the local level should provide the parameters for future development in the particular area' (South African academic). In Britain it was also argued that 'the primary criteria in terms of any rural tourism project would be in the first instance its contribution to broader developmental objectives' of the community (British academic).

The importance of complementarity between tourism projects and the needs and wants of host communities is articulated throughout the literature. For example, Fitton (1996:173) argues that tourism must be appropriate to 'the needs and aspirations of host communities in a way that is acceptable to them, sustains their economies, rather than the economies of others and is not detrimental to their culture, traditions or, indeed, their day-to-day existence'. If communities are to support tourism and welcome tourists, participation in planning and decision-making for tourism in their area is thus essential. McKercher's (1993:9) allegation that the factor that results in the most negative attitudes towards tourism is that 'local residents often see tourism development as something that happens to them; that is beyond their control' substantiates this argument. Rural tourism projects should also contribute to the viability of rural communities.

Criterion of Community Viability

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR	M	%
The development of rural tourism should stimulate a more diverse, vibrant society increasing the viability of isolated communities.	3.10	3	85%	0.69	44	3.04	3	79%	3.17	3	92%

Table 6.7 Criterion of Community Viability

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

British panellists (92%) were significantly more supportive than South Africans (79%) of the concept of rural tourism as a catalyst in increasing the viability of isolated communities. This can be attributed to the enormity of the task of increasing the viability of South Africa's poverty stricken rural communities and the realisation that rural tourism alone cannot remedy their ills. British interviewees recognised the role of tourism in maintaining the viability of rural communities in Britain and argued that project 'impacts on social services and provisional social services that support the rural community' should be assessed (British public sector). The Rural Development Commission (1996:40) alleges that in small communities 'if tourism businesses failed, other businesses too would come under pressure and the whole fabric of the community – social as well as economic – could be threatened'.

Criteria of Type and Scale of Tourism

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Project development and marketing should be managed in such a way as to generate an appropriate scale of visitation to the region thus avoiding negative impacts.	3.36	3	94%	0.59	48	3.32	3	93%	3.40	3	96%
If projects will attract more visitors an assessment should be made of the type of activities undertaken and the resultant pressure on local resources and services.	3.23	3	92%	0.58	48	3.36	3	93%	3.08	3	92%
Developers should be alert to the potential social impacts of projects and their level of acceptability/unacceptability to local people.	3.48	4	88%	0.70	46	3.61	4	89%	3.33	4	88%
Rural tourism projects should not have a negative social/environmental impact by virtue of outdoor recreational activities undertaken by tourists.	3.29	3	88%	0.72	46	3.36	3	93%	3.21	3	83%

Table 6.8 Criteria of Type and Scale of Tourism

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-four percent of the panel recognised that project development and marketing should be managed as a means of ensuring an appropriate scale of visitation to the region. Ninety-two percent of the overall panel supported the need for assessment of the pressure exerted on local resources and services by visitors to projects and their activities. Eighty-eight percent of the Delphi panellists were in agreement that developers should be alert to the potential social impacts of their projects and their level of acceptability or otherwise to local people. Academics were in consensus as to the importance of this criterion. The operational sector (77%), whose interests are more pecuniary, was less convinced. Panellists (88%) opined that rural tourism

projects should have neither negative social nor environmental impacts resulting from tourists' outdoor activities.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the findings of studies conducted to ascertain the attitudes of rural communities to tourism are somewhat contradictory and differ both between and within communities. Craik (1991:105) contends that the social and cultural impacts of tourism 'have immediate consequences...on the everyday lives of residents'. Rátz (2000), however, suggests that the characteristics, number, type, length of stay, activities and behaviour of the tourists will largely determine the impacts perceived by the host community. McKercher (1993) on the other hand asserts that tourism is an insatiable and ferociously competitive consumer of resources. When the demands on resources from tourists become irreconcilable with the needs of host communities the ground is ripe for discord. In some studies researchers found that host communities believed that tourism had increased recreation opportunities for local people (Perdue et al, 1990; Snepenger and Johnson, 1991). In other studies (D'Amore, 1983 cited in Murphy, 1985; Mckercher, 1992) residents, tourists and operators were in conflict over traditional hunting and fishing grounds. Page and Getz (1997:26) accentuate the fact that small villages and traditional societies are especially vulnerable to the forces and impacts of tourism and that 'overuse and derogation' of resources is an ever-present danger, rendering the establishment of a good balance between the demands of tourism business and the requirements of local inhabitants' imperative. In Britain recognition of the need to balance the needs of the environment, local communities and tourists has led to the adoption of visitor management plans (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). Such management systems have not yet been adopted in South Africa other than in the national parks. The following criteria relate to the potential cultural impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment.

Criteria of Culture

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR	M	%
Projects should contribute to host community confidence and pride in their culture.	3.37	3	92%	0.63	47	3.54	4	96%	3.17	3	87%
Projects should not impact negatively on the cultural integrity of the area eroding, corrupting or commodifying the local cultural resources and indigenous culture.	3.38	4	92%	0.69	48	3.50	4	93%	3.25	3	92%
Projects should impact positively on the indigenous host culture by demonstrating respect and support for human diversity	3.31	3	92%	0.61	48	3.32	3	93%	3.29	3	92%
Projects should be based on authentic local characteristics and values and reflect/reinforce the sense of place and local distinct of the area rather than promoting global homogeneity.	3.47	4	92%	0.65	47	3.45	4	93%	3.50	4	92%

Table 6.9 Criteria of Culture

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

All four criteria received 92% support from the overall Delphi panel. Factors of pride, respect and self-worth were prevalent in responses from the operational sector. Some consultants had differing opinions. 'Tourism projects should be primarily facilitators for economic activity. A secondary role MAY (panellist's emphasis) be cultural pride' (South African consultant). That communities in Britain feel strongly about their culture is exemplified by research in Cornwall (Ireland, 1999: 209), which indicated that Cornishness 'is a deeply emotional and personal statement about being part of a living culture'. Responses to a survey designed to ascertain what participants meant by 'Cornishness' solicited a diversity of responses, which encompassed values such as pride in the county, a sense of belonging and the everyday Cornish lifestyle.

There was disagreement amongst respondents with regard to the type of project considered apposite to the character of an area. On the one hand projects unrelated to the culture or character of an area, such as South Africa's Sun City or Britain's

Centre Parcs, were considered acceptable if they stimulated the economy. 'Islands of imagination also have a place if they stimulate major secondary economic activities' (South African consultant). On the other hand there was diametrical opposition to these arguments from those who contended that the need for authenticity and for projects and marketing that reflected the core values of the destination was paramount. Between these poles it was argued that 'in some cases tourism development should be a way of improving local areas and character rather than just preserving them' (British consultant). A Delphi panellist summed the matter up succinctly 'the challenge is to deal with the inherent tension between development and cultural conservation – some things have to be allowed in order to achieve other desirable outcomes' (South African operator).

Despite allegations that tourism can be a distorter, commodifier and ultimate destroyer of indigenous culture, Hashimoto (2002:215) argues that tourism can also 'contribute to the protection and enhancement of traditions, customs and heritage, which would otherwise disappear'. Roberts and Hall (2001:5) agree that tourism has the potential to 'reinvigorate local culture (and) instil a sense of local pride, self-esteem and identity' in rural communities. The necessity that rural communities, embarking upon tourism, retain ownership of their cultures and the way in which they are portrayed is, however, critical both to maintaining cultural integrity and host community support for tourism (Crouch, 1994; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Among the most controversial cultural impacts of tourism are those relating to land.

Criterion of Land

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Investors/developers should be aware that indigenous people attach strong cultural/spiritual values to land and should thus be consulted at an early stage when investment decisions could possibly involve land which is spiritually significant.	3.48	4	92%	0.70	48	3.54	4	96%	3.42	4	88%

Table 6.10 Criterion of Land

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-two percent of the Delphi panel recognised the significance of cultural and spiritual values attached to land by indigenous people and consequently the imperative that developers enter into consultation with the relevant people prior to taking any investment decision. Land-related conflict in South Africa has already been discussed in relation to land-use planning in Chapter Two and the public sector in Chapter Five. The strong spiritual attachment to land, in particular ancestral burial grounds, however, adds a further dimension to this complex and sensitive problem.

Cultural attachment to land and the countryside in Britain also runs deep. The claim that in Britain 'too much evaluation (of project proposals) is guided by cultural ideas of what is appropriate or what is inappropriate, the so-called countryside aesthetic idea' (British academic) highlights this phenomenon. This aesthetic is explained in the rural tourism literature that refers to the 'symbolical significance' of the countryside (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997:16) and English people's 'deep love for, and response to, the countryside' (The Countryside Commission, 1987a in Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The cultural attachment to land and the conflict with regard to its use is thus just as prevalent in Britain as in South Africa, albeit for different reasons. The following criterion pertains to the relationship between rural tourism projects and heritage preservation.

Criterion of Local Heritage

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Project developers should work with other organisations and the community in preserving and promoting local heritage, historical sites and architectural landmarks, where possible offering economic support.	3.27	3	87%	0.69	45	3.36	4	89%	3.17	3	83%

Table 6.11 Criterion of Local Heritage

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The importance of project developers collaborating in the preservation and promotion of local heritage was afforded recognition across the panel (87%). Academics were in consensus in this regard. There were no additional comments from respondents.

Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) argue that recent trends, such as increased interest in heritage, have also led to greater interest in rural tourism as the appeal of historic buildings, gardens, and rural industrial centres has burgeoned. Furthermore, as Page and Getz (1997: 26) point out 'heritage conservation is clearly a feasible goal for rural tourism, as many old buildings can be creatively adapted to modern uses'. This, together with the presentation of other facets of local heritage, such as craft demonstrations or countryside festivals and events, provides a variety of commercial opportunities for rural tourism operators (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Preservation and promotion of local heritage is thus in their own best interests. Arts and crafts form an important element of local heritage.

Criterion of Arts and Craft

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should provide linkages to and promote local crafts and skills, offering encouragement, particularly to the young, to learn and revitalise local arts and crafts, producing items which are unique to the area.	3.21	3	85%	0.75	44	3.29	3	89%	3.13	3	79%

Table 6.12 Criterion of Arts and Craft

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-five percent of the panel confirmed the need for projects to support and promote local arts, crafts and skills. The only respondents to comment on this criterion were South African academics. On the one hand they posited that networking and collaboration between producers, with limited ability to promote their products, and projects with available space who could serve as a market to expose these wares was imperative. On the other hand they cautioned against dependency by producers on linkages with tourism projects and argued that arts and crafts production might need to adopt a market-led orientation. This is a controversial issue that has also been the subject of debate in the literature (for example, Altman 1990; Duggan, 1997).

Criterion of Architecture and Design

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Consideration should be given to architectural plans and physical design in the context of locally recognised/approved norms and the incorporation of local ethnic designs and artefacts into buildings.	3.11	3	86%	0.69	43	3.13	3	81%	3.08	3	92%

Table 6.13 Criterion of Architecture and Design

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-two percent of British panellists supported the use of local architectural norms and the incorporation of ethnic designs and artefacts into buildings as opposed to 81% of South Africans. Consultants (69%) were significantly less convinced.

The focus group argued that local flavour should be incorporated into all aspects of projects and contended that where there was community involvement they should take the lead in project design and construction since this built 'community respect and they take ownership'. South African interviewees supported this contention arguing that culture should be woven into the thread of the total tourist experience.

These findings are congruent to Crouch's (1994:99) contention that rural tourism should focus on 'giving prominence to local cultural expertise, experience and ideas'. Incorporation of traditional architecture and design and the inclusion of local artefacts add to the character of buildings and enhance the 'authentic' rural experience (Page and Getz, 1997). Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer (1994) agree with this concept arguing that rural areas should seek to develop a unique image by developing innovative projects based on their own distinctive strengths and resources. The following criteria relate to interpretation.

Criteria of Interpretation

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Interpretation should be provided of the attractions/experiences around which projects are located.	3.35	4	85%	0.74	44	3.46	4	82%	3.21	3	88%
Cultural awareness programmes should be introduced for tourists in order to endorse their responsibility to observe and show respect for the norms, practices and values of the host community.	2.92	3	73%	0.80	37	3.21	3	89%	2.57	3	52%

Table 6.14 Criteria of Interpretation

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Interpretation of the attractions and experiences around which projects are located was highly rated by 85% of the overall panel. British panellists (88%), academics (92%) and the operational sector (92%) perceived this as particularly important. There was a marked difference of opinion between South African and British panellists with regard to cultural awareness programmes for tourists. While 89% percent of South African panellists were supportive of the criterion only 52% of British panellists perceived this as important. This difference is attributable to the markedly different cultural practices of South Africa's indigenous African hosts and the predominantly western tourists who visit them. Without visitor awareness some of these practices are likely to be misconstrued.

Based on the findings of his studies Aronsson (1994) argues that tourists should find out about the culture of the people they will encounter prior to their visit and that travel agents and tour operators should attempt to educate their clients in this regard. Dimanche (2003) extends this responsibility also to destination marketers. Aronsson (1994), however, admits that this is unlikely to occur on any significant

scale. The onus for such education thus rests with the interpretation facilities available at the rural tourism destination.

Roberts and Rognvaldson (2001) argue that while interpretation has a valuable role in reducing the potential for conflict and detrimental behaviour resulting from ignorance, its value in this regard has received little recognition. It is further contended that interpretation can play an important educative role in heightening the tourist's appreciation of the place visited, stimulating their interest in learning more and inducing increased positive, caring and respectful behaviour towards both the cultural and natural environment (Green, 1995; Roberts and Rognvaldson, 2001).

Criterion of Non-Development

	SA/ UK x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	UK	M	%
The impact on the local community if a project is not developed should be ascertained (socially/economically/environmentally)	3.06	3	80%	0.79	40	3.19	4	74%	2.91	3	87%

Table 6.15 Criterion of Non-Development

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty percent of the panel agreed that the impact on the local community if a project was not developed should be ascertained. British panellists (87%) perceived the criterion as more important than their South African counterparts (74%). Academics (91%) and the public sector (85%) also attested to its importance. Consultants (77%) and the operational sector (69%) rated it less significant. Although this criterion is also recognised in the literature (Mill and Morrison, 1992), such a pre-implementation assessment would be difficult and would necessarily include substantial conjecture. South Africans, consultants and the operational sector, biased in favour of development, perceive such an impact study as less relevant. The following theme introduces the socio-economic criteria highly rated by respondents.

Socioeconomic Criteria

South Africans were more supportive than British respondents of criteria pertaining to economic empowerment, skills transfer and entrepreneurship. Conversely British respondents were more supportive of criteria pertaining to projects' direct impacts on the local economy. Differences in the levels of support between the two countries exceeded 15% in six criteria (Appendix 11). Of the sectors academics were once again most supportive of the criteria. Table 6.16 reflects the percentage of the socioeconomic criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
76%	55%	34%	52%

Table 6.16 Percentage of socioeconomic criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics generally rated criteria from a theoretical perspective of what rural tourism projects should aim to achieve in a local community. Consultants and operators of both countries, however, stressed the importance of basing projects on market and economic viability rather than philanthropic motives. Respondents also emphasised the need for a balance between the ideal and the practical, a viewpoint best expressed by a British operator. 'In an ideal world all the statements are important. In the real world the best is to highlight examples of best practice and strive to achieve/maintain/exceed these'. The first criterion in the socio-economic theme relates to the role of projects in helping to reverse rural decline.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED SOCIOECONOMIC CRITERIA**Criterion of Reversal of Rural Decline**

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Rural tourism projects should help to reverse rural decline and contribute to sustainable rural development in the local area.	3.35	4	87%	0.76	45	3.21	4	82%	3.50	4	92%

Table 6.17 Criterion of Reversal of Rural Decline

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists (87%) agreed that rural tourism projects should contribute to the reversal of rural decline and to sustainable rural development in the local area. Consultants (71%) were once again least supportive. Consultant panellists argued that although displacement and outmigration were seen as indicators of rural decline, this was not a wholly negative trend and could have both positive and negative effects for an area. This was particularly relevant in South Africa where overpopulation of some rural areas was an underlying problem.

It is argued that reversing out-migration, population decline and the trend towards older rural communities is one of the benefits of rural tourism (Page and Getz, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). However, in Britain the trend towards out-migration has been countered by an increasing influx of urbanites seeking to assume a rural lifestyle (Roberts and Hall, 2001). This has brought new problems such as increased prices of housing to rural communities.

Brunt (2001) has noted that dearth of local employment has led to declining numbers of residents in rural communities as out-migration has taken place. This in turn has resulted in a decline in the provision of community services. The Rural Development Commission (1996) alleges that one of the benefits of rural tourism lies in the fact that tourist demand for goods and services can play a valuable role in maintaining the viability of rural businesses and services to the ultimate benefit of

local inhabitants. It is, however, the potential economic contribution of rural tourism to the local economy that is avidly sought.

Criteria of Economic Contribution

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR	M	%
Projects should add value in meeting the basic needs of economic development and contribute, both directly and indirectly, to the economic growth of the area.	3.35	3	94%	0.59	48	3.32	3	93%	3.39	3	96%
Projects should make a viable contribution to improvement in local wealth, income generation and per capita disposable income.	3.17	3	87%	0.65	45	3.07	3	82%	3.29	3	92%
Projects should not lead to increased community dependence on external influences such as grants, an increase in economic vulnerability/instability, or the spread of risk through diversification.	3.26	4	86%	0.75	44	3.34	4	93%	3.17	3	79%

Table 6.18 Criteria of Economic Contribution

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Overall 95% of panellists recognised that rural tourism projects should contribute to economic development and growth of the local area. The importance of projects making a viable contribution to improvement in local wealth, income generation and per capital disposal income of the host community was acknowledged by 87% of the panel. Academics and the public sector were in consensus in this regard while the consultants (71%) and operational sector (77%) accorded the statement less importance, again indicating an emphasis on commercial gain as opposed to considerations of wider community beneficiation. Where rural tourism projects are themselves struggling to survive, expectations of broader economic considerations are also not realistic, a factor to which the attitude of some operators could be attributed. Ninety-three percent of South Africans were of the opinion that tourism projects should not increase the economic vulnerability of the community or its

dependence on external influences. Academics perceived this as particularly important (100%).

Research suggests that rural tourism may generate increased income, stimulate other rural economic activity and additional employment opportunities, help to diversify the local economy and create a range of entrepreneurial opportunities (Bramwell, 1994). For other rural inhabitants the potential for pluractivity may be generated. Conversely a decline in the number of tourists, or the failure of a rural tourism project, can negatively affect the general local economy. Saeter (1998) points out that tourism may also conflict and compete with other rural industries, occupations and activities generating negative impacts on the overall economic stability of an area. Kappert (2000), for example, argues that in the Minho area of Portugal tourism has on the one hand supported agriculture by stimulating the demand for local produce. On the other hand the negative consequences of tourism have included an increase in the price of land and a shortage of agricultural labour. In such cases the costs of rural tourism may outweighed the benefits.

Criterion of Equity

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR	M	%
Rural tourism projects should encourage equity participation and fair, reasonable, equitable flow and distribution of benefits and costs to local communities.	3.15	3	83%	0.85	43	3.32	3	89%	2.96	3	75%

Table 6.19 Criterion of Equity

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-three percent of the panel agreed that rural tourism projects should encourage equitable participation and flow and distribution of tourism benefits and costs. South African panellists (89%) perceived this criterion as more important than their British (75%) counterparts. Ninety-two percent of public sector panellists supported the criterion as opposed to 71% of consultants. Respondents nonetheless

argued that projects succeed or fail on economic viability and that business principles, rather than altruism, must be the governing factor:

You have to stand back from your altruism to say how do I make this work? Stand back and become really hard-nosed, work out a good project plan. There is limited market in appealing to people's conscience. Very few people will visit a project from altruistic values if it doesn't have what interests them (South African operator).

Fowkes and Jonsson (2001:5) similarly argue that 'it is necessary to approach potential developments from the basis of a strong business case and not a social case'. The Rural Development Commission (1996) has identified a series of factors, which mediate the more equitable spread of costs and benefits within a community. Amongst these the nature, ownership and management structure of the tourism resource and the degree to which tourism business and community roleplayers have created collaborative working arrangements are paramount. They nonetheless acknowledge that where tourism projects are purely commercial attaining more equitable community beneficiation is extremely difficult. Butler (1999:71) additionally points out that 'in many cases the benefits of tourism may accrue to new actors on the economic scene, while to other established operators there are only costs incurred by accommodating tourism development or expansion'.

The spread of benefits and costs are, however, not solely economic. Hall and Jenkins (1998) argue that rural tourism should both stimulate local business and assist in the development of facilities, services and recreational opportunities for both rural communities and tourists. Evidence from case studies suggests that while tourism is frequently the catalyst for the retention of rural services, the viability of rural businesses and the provision of more choice and enhanced viability for leisure and recreation facilities, these indirect economic benefits are frequently not recognised (The Rural Development Commission, 1996). Maximisation of potential benefits calls for project integration with other economic sectors.

Criterion of Integration

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR X	M	%
Projects should be well integrated and work in partnership with other economic sectors in the wider locality, including more traditional rural economic provision and activities.	3.33	3	92%	0.62	48	3.36	3	96%	3.29	3	88%

Table 6. 20 Criterion of Integration

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The criterion that projects should be well integrated and work in partnership with other economic sectors was well supported across the panel (92%). Both South African and British interviewees believed that this was an important criterion against which to measure rural tourism projects and espoused the view that this contributed to project success. 'How well has getting all the parts that plug in and makes this project integrated been done? Tourism should be integrated, the more it's integrated the more it's successful' (South African operator).

The importance of this criterion to British interviewees was encapsulated in a comment from a member of the public sector who argued that rural tourism projects:

Need to have a strategic view. It (the project) has to benefit the whole county. It should also look outside the county to a regional level, tourism doesn't respect county borders. It needs to link, as far as it can, to as many cross-sectors as possible. It needs to look how it can involve the creative industries like arts and crafts, entertainment and museums. How can it involve food and drink? How can any rural tourism project involve a cross-sector?

The importance of integration into the local economy is emphasised by the World Tourism Organisation (1998) who argue that many of the potential benefits of tourism are lost if tourism projects are not integrated into other local economic sectors and do not pursue strong cross-sectoral linkages with related economic activities. Roberts and Hall (2001), however, point out that rural tourism operators generally concentrate on their individual businesses to the exclusion of other rural activities, thus curtailing integration of tourism with other rural development sectors

and minimising the contribution of rural tourism to the local economy. The following criterion pertains to the working relationship between rural tourism projects.

Criterion of Relationships

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
A strong relationship/working partnership between a project and other existing tourism enterprises and structures should be secured, enabling it to form an integral part of existing provision and activities in the wider locality.	3.19	3	87%	0.72	45	3.54	4	96%	2.79	3	75%

Table 6.21 Criterion of Relationships

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

South Africans (96%) perceived securing strong working relationships/partnerships with existing tourism enterprises and structures as more significant than did British panellists (75%). Whilst other sectors rated this criterion highly, the operational sector (69%) did not perceive it as being of undue significance. This attitude is explained by the tendency of small rural tourism operators to view each other as competition rather than an opportunity to optimise cooperative strengths and offer better service to the customer (Roberts and Hall, 2001).

Criterion of Complementarity

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should complement, as opposed to conflicting with, existing programmes.	3.38	3	96%	0.63	50	3.50	4	96%	3.25	3	96%

Table 6.22 Criterion of Complementarity

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of panellists perceived it as essential that projects should complement existing programmes. Respondents argued that no new project or its activities should conflict with an existing tourism enterprise to the extent that it seriously damaged the financial viability of the other project or its activities. It was also pointed out that if new activities were introduced into an area that were not compatible with those already in existence, it was possible to destroy the attraction of the entire tourism destination. For example, a project offering off-road motorbike trails would not be complementary to one offering tours for twitchers in the same locality.

The incompatible demands on resources for tourism use, the potential for conflict between various forms of tourism and categories of tourist, and the possibility of eventual displacement of one or other resource user, are highlighted in the literature (Butler et al, 1998; Page and Getz, 1997; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

Criterion of Visitor Experience

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should enhance the tourist experience and increase visitor satisfaction levels by providing an adequate mix of new, high quality, interesting, educational experiences for visitors, thus gratifying their expectations.	3.49	4	88%	0.70	45	3.57	4	86%	3.40	4	91%

Table 6.23 Criterion of Visitor Experience

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-eight percent of the panel was in agreement that projects should enhance the tourist experience and increase visitor satisfaction by introducing new, high quality, interesting and educational experiences.

This finding is congruent with that of an analysis of Scottish visitor attractions, which concluded that in the future tourists would be in search of innovation and new and exciting experiences (Fyall et al, 2000). Tourism offers increasing opportunity to 'stage', package and sell rural experiences (Roberts and Hall, 2001:148). Such packages may encompass entertaining, educational, escapist or aesthetic experiences each of which involve a greater or lesser degree of spectatorship or active participation by tourists (Roberts and Hall, 2001). Tourism routes are conducive to the creation of a variety of experiences as tourists traverse their length.

Criterion of Tourism Routes

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
New rural tourism projects should expand the product base of traditional (or where applicable, new) tourist routes, enhancing their potential to attract and hold visitors in the area for extended periods.	3.13	3	88%	0.60	46	3.32	3	96%	2.92	3	79%

Table 6.24 Criterion of Tourism Routes

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

South Africans (96%) accorded the expansion of tourism routes greater significance than did British panellists (79%). Support throughout the sectors reflected a minimum of 85% consensus. Focus group members continuously reiterated the perceived value of tourism routes. Among the benefits highlighted were the fact that such routes provided an opportunity for the sale of local products. The need for partnership between government, the private sector and the community in the development of tourism routes was recognised and local area infighting identified as the biggest constraint to success.

South African interviewees argued that new projects need to be part of tourism routes, adjacent to major attractions and networking with other projects if they are to survive. The caveat was, however, sounded that routes should be market-related and provide an added-value experience thus enhancing business potential. The development of tourism routes in South Africa is particularly valuable in providing viability for small rural tourism operators from the previously disadvantaged sector of South African society (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). British respondents did not pass comment on this criterion. However, Britain already has well established rural tourism routes such as those in the Lake District, the Cotswolds or Shakespeare Country.

A diversity of tourism routes, encompassing cultural, textile, crafts, and food and wine routes, has been developed throughout Europe (Roberts and Hall, 2001). Some

include hiking or walking trails or the use of an amalgamation of different modes of travel. In Canada (Telfer, 2002) and the American West (Hill and Gibbons, 1994) the development of tourism routes has stimulated the growth of entrepreneurial projects including handicrafts, entertainment and local guiding services to cater to the needs of tourists. Projects thus complement each other in creating a diverse array of attractions and facilities catering to tourists traversing their length. Roberts and Hall (2001), however, emphasise that tourism routes should be thematically planned and that the planning process should be inclusive of all local stakeholders. Tourism routes may also contribute to enhanced money flows by virtue of the multiplier effect.

Criteria of Multipliers

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should contribute to local money flows and support economic linkages and local supply networks, creating stable local markets for local products, retaining tourism spend in the local area and adding to the sustainability of local shops and jobs.	3.41	4	94%	0.62	48	3.41	4	93%	3.42	3	96%
Tourists visiting projects should through their demand for goods and services contribute to the generation of these commodities in the surrounding economy.	3.15	3	86%	0.72	42	3.25	4	88%	3.04	3	83%

Table 6.25 Criteria of Multipliers

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-four percent of the panel agreed that rural tourism projects should contribute to local money flows, economic linkages and the creation of local markets for local products, enhancing the multiplier effect on the local economy. Eighty-six percent of the panel agreed that tourist demand for goods and services should contribute to the generation of these commodities in the surrounding economy. Whilst academics were unanimous in supporting the importance of this criterion, consultants (62%)

once again afforded it little recognition. Focus group members expressed the belief that rural tourism suppliers needed to be persuaded to stem leakage and support local goods and services. British interviewees similarly emphasised the imperative of rural tourism projects stimulating multiplier effects, creating economic linkages and maximising the benefits retained in the local economy by using local produce, services and employment.

Mathieson and Wall (1982) assert that the stronger the linkages between sectors of the local economy, the more positive the impact upon the multiplier and the less the shrinkage as a result of leakages from the economy is likely to be. The importance of the multiplier to rural communities is emphasised in the literature. Kappert (2000:263) for example, argues that 'to Northern Portugal's communities, what matters is not just how much is spent but also how much remains in local circulation'. Butler and Clark (1992), however, argue that rural tourism is characteristically prey to low multiplier benefits and high leakages and is therefore not the solution to local economic problems, most particularly in areas where the economy is already weak. The Countryside Agency (1999:2) confirms that in rural England leakages are high. Only 30% of tourist spend on accommodation, 20% on attractions and catering, 5% on retail and 2.5% on transport is retained in the local economy. Furthermore, not all rural tourism projects and businesses catering to tourists either employ local people or support local products. In Norway, Saeter (1998:244) has drawn similar conclusions and thus argues that the indirect benefits of rural tourism are overstated. A diversified economy also has a role in enhancing the multiplier effect.

Criterion of Diversification

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should act as agents in helping to diversify the local economy.	2.96	3	79%	0.74	41	2.82	3	71%	3.13	3	88%

Table 6.26 Criterion of Diversification

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

British panellists (88%) perceived the agency of projects in diversifying the local economy as more important than did their South African counterparts (71%). Ninety-two percent of the operational sector recognised the significance of this criterion while only 57% of the consultants considered it important. British panellists also perceived it important that projects should help to stimulate pluriactivity in the wider area, which in itself would lead to a more diversified economy. The attitude of South African respondents is best explained by the fact that in many rural areas there has been no prior development of any description. The generation of income and employment is thus the priority concern, with issues of diversification a secondary consideration. By contrast, in Britain rural tourism is commonly sought as a means of economic diversification where agriculture or industry is in decline.

Rural tourism is increasingly perceived as a mechanism through which to contribute to the diversification of economic activity (See Gannon, 1994; Luloff et al, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Its potential value in this regard is recognised by governments in both developed and less-developed countries (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999; Government of South Africa, 1996). The following criterion relates to issues of transformation.

Criterion of Transformation

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be able to meet all the challenges of transformation, including resource transfers, as they develop.	3.19	3	85%	0.73	41	3.19	4	81%	3.18	3	91%

Table 6.27 Criterion of Transformation

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Overall the panel (85%) supported the criterion that projects should meet the challenges of transformation, including resource transfers as they develop. British panellists (91%) accorded this special significance. Academics and the operational

sector were in consensus in this regard whilst the public sector was notably less supportive (69%).

Roberts and Hall (2001: 26) describe transformation as a process of structural change that 'implies flexible approaches which respect cultures, sovereignty and people's apprehensions, and which can be imbued with ideals of sustainability and equality'. Although transformation would commonly flow from fundamental political change, such as that in South Africa or in Eastern Block countries, it is also applicable to the structural change that rural areas of many western nations, such as Britain, are undergoing. An important facet of such transformation is the transfer of resources, such as land, to either the ownership or custody of local communities. The following criterion pertains to the indirect economic disbenefits that tourist pressure on infrastructure may impose on the host community.

Criteria of Infrastructure

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR X	M	%
Projects should not lead to demands for new infrastructure, which have unacceptable economic or environmental impacts on the area.	3.52	4	96%	0.58	50	3.61	4	93%	3.42	3	100%
Tourist demand and consumption should not lead to indirect economic disbenefit resulting from overuse or increased pressure on local infrastructural systems.	3.23	3	90%	0.61	47	3.29	4	82%	3.17	3	100%

Table 6.28 Criteria of Infrastructure

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of the panel believed that projects should not lead to demands for new infrastructure that was economically or environmentally detrimental to the local area. Similarly 90% of the panel perceived that tourist demand and consumption should not lead to economic disbenefit resulting from overuse or pressure on local infrastructure. British panellists were unanimous on both counts. South Africans emphasised that whilst infrastructure was often a prerequisite for the development of

tourism projects this was not necessarily the case and argued that infrastructure development resulting from tourist projects could bring concomitant benefits to the host community.

On the one hand the infrastructural requirements of tourism can lead to new or improved infrastructure that also benefits the rural community (Hall and Jenkins, 1998). On the other hand traffic congestion and the overuse of critical services such as electricity or water can result in undue pressure on the local infrastructure, the costs of which are often borne by the community (Page and Getz, 1997). However, the Rural Development Commission (1996) points out that where bigger tourism projects seek new or upgraded infrastructure a financial contribution may be required from the project proponent. This is congruent to respondent contention, mentioned in Chapter Five, that whilst the provision of infrastructure is a public sector responsibility, paying for it is not necessarily so.

As Middleton and Hawkins (1998) point out the responsibility for excessive demands on infrastructure rests both with project developers and with the lack of control in this regard exercised by the public sector. The need for proactive public policy pertaining to infrastructure provision is included in the discussion of the public sector role in Chapter Five. The following three criteria relate to the direct accrual of economic benefits to members of the local community as a result of rural tourism projects.

Criterion of Ownership

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR	M	%
The ownership structure and beneficiaries of projects and their financial gains should be taken into account e.g. the nature and scale of stakeholder partnerships, joint venture participation, trusts, community, co-operative, state, private sector/ commercial or employee ownership.	3.35	4	88%	0.69	45	3.56	4	93%	3.13	3	83%

Table 6.29 Criterion of Ownership

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists (88%) concurred that the ownership structure and beneficiaries of projects should be taken into account when evaluating a project. The public sector was in consensus in this regard (100%).

It is not uncommon that local residents feel antagonism towards outsiders who own tourism projects as exemplified by Ireland's (1999) study in Cornwall. However, as pointed out in Chapter Two, exogenous tourism development in rural areas may also have positive results. Furthermore, whilst Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer (1994) argue that rural areas should build on their own resources in developing tourism, they also acknowledge that local realities might dictate that external capital and expertise be sought in order to develop a rural tourism sector. Whatever the ownership structure of rural tourism projects, the employment opportunities generated for local people make a significant contribution to the generation of, or supplement to, local income.

Criteria of Employment

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should generate and retain a range of diverse, quality sustainable, direct and indirect employment opportunities for local people across a broad spectrum of talents and skills.	3.18	3	88%	0.62	45	3.11	3	85%	3.25	3	92%
Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should help to alleviate long-term unemployment.	3.15	3	87%	0.70	45	3.18	3	86%	3.13	3	88%

Table 6.30 Criteria of Employment

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-eight percent of panellists agreed that projects should generate a range of diverse employment opportunities across a broad spectrum of talents and skills for local people. Academics (100%) were in consensus with regard to the importance of this criterion. Consultants perceived it as substantially less important (69%). The importance of rural tourism projects in alleviating long-term unemployment was also highly rated by panellists (87%).

Members of the focus group agreed that the generation of employment for local residents was a primary criterion against which projects should be evaluated and argued 'if locals benefit from employment they will support tourism projects all the way'. A member of the focus group drew attention to the snowball effect of tourism employment pointing out that the earnings of 20 employees in his establishment supported 140 local community residents. Both South African and British interviewees recognised the importance of employment. One phrased it this way 'jobs are valued far more than actual ownership of tourism product. Jobs are everything' (South African operator). It was further argued that operators benefited by employing local people who stayed in employment longer since they were within

their own social network. The imperative that tourism projects should first and foremost be regarded as a business was, however, reiterated:

Ultimately it is economic activity that creates employment and any development scenario that ignores this will incur the disadvantages of tourism with none of the benefits (British consultant).

The creation of jobs as one of the potential benefits of rural tourism is acknowledged in the literature (for example Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). As pointed out in Chapter Two, the sector is particularly recognised for its ability to generate employment opportunities for women who are the dominant figures in agrotourism and homestays (Garcia-Roman et al, 1995; Kinnaird et al, 1994; Oppermann, 1996). Despite low pay and problems of seasonality employment in rural tourism is valued in communities with high levels of unemployment (Vaughan and Long, 1982). The lack of skills amongst rural residents is, however, a constraint to the recruitment of local staff. This issue is further discussed in Chapter Seven. In addition to the employment generated, rural tourism projects may also stimulate auxiliary entrepreneurial opportunities for local residents.

Criteria of Entrepreneurship

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be dynamic, with opportunities to identify and develop new entrepreneurial opportunities.	3.47	4	92%	0.64	47	3.70	4	100%	3.21	3	83%
Projects should assist in developing/ empowering local entrepreneurs for participation in ancillary business start-up and other local entrepreneurial activity.	3.06	3	81%	0.67	42	3.29	3	89%	2.79	3	71%

Table 6.31 Criteria of Entrepreneurship

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Delphi panellists (92%) acknowledged the need for rural tourism projects to stimulate entrepreneurial development. Consultants, however, tempered this support

by highlighting that opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs were often directly related to the growth of rural tourism and existing businesses. It was also argued that rural tourism operators were unlikely to support entrepreneurs by outsourcing work if they were themselves struggling to remain viable. South Africans (89%) believed that projects should assist in developing and empowering local entrepreneurs to take advantage of ancillary business opportunities that might arise. Only 71% of British panellists considered this of importance.

The need for entrepreneurial development was emphasised in the focus group. It was, however, recognized that local people are frequently unable to capitalise on opportunities due to lack of funding with the result that outsiders seized new business opportunities. This underscores the importance of public sector funding support for new entrepreneurs as discussed in Chapter Five. Members were in consensus that rural tourism development should be endogenous. There was nonetheless recognition that allowance would have to be made for host community's individual characteristics and level of entrepreneurship and that every opportunity must be afforded for the development of business and entrepreneurial skills. The caution was also sounded that new entrepreneurs should 'think small and evolve' as opposed to trying to expand rapidly. South African interviewees cautioned that there was a need to balance an entrepreneurial attitude with good business practice and highlighted the difficulties entrepreneurs experienced in networking and integrating 'entrepreneurial opportunities as seamlessly as possible into the mainstream tourism product' (South African academic). It was also argued that 'much more could be done to stimulate entrepreneurship' (British consultant) if the public sector optimally utilised the resources at their disposal.

The importance of entrepreneurial development is emphasised by Timothy (2002) who argues that an increase in small, endogenous entrepreneurial enterprises and activities functions as an impetus for local economic growth and stimulation of employment opportunity. Koh (2000:209) similarly asserts that entrepreneurs are 'the engine' driving tourism development in communities and spreading the benefits of socio-economic development. Telfer and Wall (1996), however, agree that entrepreneurs experience difficulties in networking and allege that whilst informal

co-operation exists amongst small entrepreneurs there is little co-operation between small entrepreneurs and larger tourism enterprises.

The findings of this study, which highlight the necessity of training in a range of entrepreneurial and management skills, is congruent to the contention of the Aspen Institute (1996) that the availability of appropriate education, training and skills provision is recognised as imperative to the development of an environment conducive to entrepreneurial development. Closely aligned with the development of entrepreneurship is the issue of skills-transfer.

Criterion of Skills Transfer

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should include the enhancement of the indigenous skills base, with emphasis on skills transfer at all levels.	3.38	4	90%	0.68	45	3.57	4	96%	3.17	3	83%

Table 6.32 Criterion of Skills Transfer

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety percent of panellists recognised the role of projects in enhancing the indigenous skills base. Consultants were in consensus on the significance of this criterion. The benefits of undertaking a programme of skills transfer were well articulated by a South African operator who described how, two years into his project, all management positions were filled by local people, resulting in a 'strong sense of pride now felt in management and in doing things properly'. Failure to build the capacity of local people commonly results in a situation in which outsiders fill higher-level jobs. This is particularly prevalent in less-developed countries where indigenous people suffer the constraints of a lack of education and a deficiency in basic skills (English, 1986). The transfer of skills is an important element of the process of empowerment.

Criterion of Empowerment

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Rural tourism projects should lead to community empowerment through participation in the construction, management operational supply systems and contribution to the tourism product.	3.18	3	86%	0.83	43	3.39	4	93%	2.91	3	77%

Table 6.33 Criterion of Empowerment

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-three percent of South Africans believed that involvement in tourism projects should lead to community empowerment as opposed to 77% of British panellists. Once again academics were unanimous in their support of this criterion. Consultants (77%) were less so. Respondents expressed divergent views with regard to empowerment. In South Africa respondents alleged that empowerment was essential to enable rural people to create meaningful, long-term, sustainable, income-generating projects for themselves. However, British consultants argued that only when projects were financially successful could wider issues of empowerment be addressed.

South African respondents disagreed as to where the responsibility for empowerment lay. Interviewees alleged that the onus lay on government to support community empowerment by the creation of incentives that encouraged public/private/ community partnerships and by ensuring that funding was linked to empowerment objectives. In the focus group it was argued that it was the private rural tourism sector that should be the driver of empowerment.

Empowerment issues are difficult. Merely supplying the funding with which to start projects does not automatically bring about empowerment. Fetterman (2001:3), who as discussed in Chapter Three advocates evaluation as a means empowerment, emphasises that nobody can empower somebody else 'people empower themselves, often with assistance and coaching'. He argues that processes aimed at

empowerment are those that help people to develop the skills needed to solve their own problems and take their own decisions. Taylor (2000:4) agrees asserting that empowerment processes are those 'which result in people exercising more control over the decisions and resources that directly affect the quality of their lives'. Southgate and Sharpley (2002:262) in turn argue that the future of the tourism industry will be largely dependent on adoption of the principles 'of community empowerment, participatory development planning and the value of local indigenous knowledge'. Closely related to the concept of empowerment is that of self-reliance.

Criterion of Self-Reliance

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should encourage self-reliance and community interest in genuine participation by means of employment or investment rather than quick money or empowerment tax. (SWEAT equity- benefits linked to responsibilities).	3.37	4	88%	0.75	45	3.57	4	93%	3.13	3	83%

Table 6.34 Criterion of Self-Reliance

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The encouragement of self-reliance and beneficiation linked to participation and responsibility was well rated by panellists (88%). Members of the focus group agreed that people must be encouraged to accept responsibility for their projects and warned that failure to foster self-reliance meant that projects remained dependant on their champions for survival. A South African operator expressed it this way 'when the community is totally dependent on the energy of one particular person the project has a three to five year lifespan because that is the lifespan of somebody's energy and focus and if they are burnt out that project falls apart'. Case studies undertaken in South Africa provide evidence that failure to foster self-reliance leads ultimately to project failure (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003). A British public sector interviewee claimed that there was a general lack of self-reliance amongst rural people in Britain 'they're used to subsidies and advice from the public sector

for free. There's a history of public sector intervention and I think they've become used to that'.

Criteria in the final theme of this chapter are those pertaining to the physical environment that, in the view of respondents, warrant inclusion in the suggested index of criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Environmental Criteria

British panellists recorded higher levels of support to environmental criteria than their South African counterparts (Appendix 12). There was, however, no criterion in which the difference in the level of support between countries exceeded 15%. Of the sectors, academics were once again most supportive of the criteria. Table 6.35 reflects the percentage of the environmental criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
94%	89%	72%	67%

Table 6.35 Percentage of environmental criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

Overall sectoral support was high. Once again criteria with a more social orientation, such as the need to foster community pride in the environment, drew least support from consultants. The 'business first' approach adopted by this sector throughout the research was reiterated. 'It should be recognised that not all of the demands of the environmental lobby can be met whilst sustaining economic viability. Priority should be given to environmental issues that affect the sustainability of the tourism product' (British consultant). The public sector, however, recognised the importance of environmental quality to rural tourism 'fine landscapes, biodiversity and all these kinds of things. That is the thing that underpins this whole business' (British public sector).

Tourism has both positive and negative impacts on the rural environment. On the one hand the income generated by rural tourists can provide the finance needed to enhance conservation. On the other hand an increase in the number of tourists seeking recreation and adventure activities in rural areas elevates the danger of

inflicting substantial environmental damage on sensitive ecosystems. The first group of criteria in the environmental theme pertain to resource usage.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA

Criteria of Resource Usage and Protection

	SA BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should ensure that their use of water is efficient and that neither they, nor any of their activities, pollute water supplies or catchment areas.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	51	3.71	4	96%	3.71	4	100%
Projects should promote and apply green planning principles and management systems which reduce and recycle waste and minimise pollution.	3.38	3	94%	0.60	49	3.36	4	89%	3.42	3	100%
Projects should conserve energy and develop strategies for deployment of alternative energy sources.	3.29	3	90%	0.64	47	3.29	4	86%	3.29	3	96%

Table 6.36 Criteria of Resource Usage and Protection

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-eight percent of the Delphi panel recognised the imperative of efficient water consumption and the necessity that tourism projects should prevent pollution of water supplies. Ninety-four percent agreed that projects should apply green planning principles in minimising pollution and reducing and recycling waste. Ninety percent supported the concept of conserving energy and developing strategies for deployment of alternative energy sources.

Depletion of water supplies, excessive waste production, poor sewage disposal, and the attenuation of fossil fuels for the generation of electricity are amongst the

negative impacts of tourism identified in the literature (Goodall and Stabler, 1997; Hunter and Green, 1995; Tribe et al, 2000). In some rural areas of the less-developed world water, polluted by human effluent, becomes a fertile breeding ground for diseases such as cholera and bilharzia, which can have serious effects on the health of both tourists and locals (Hitchcock, 1997). Pollution generated by tourist traffic gives rise to equally negative environmental impacts.

Criteria of Traffic Impacts

	SA/ BR X	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should take steps to try to overcome, or mitigate, negative traffic impacts.	3.20	3	86%	0.66	44	3.34	4	89%	3.04	3	83%
Consideration should be made with regard to traffic generation to and within the destination area as a result of a project.	3.15	3	86%	0.65	43	3.24	3	88%	3.04	3	83%

Table 6.37 Criteria of Traffic Impacts

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-six percent of the Delphi panel recognised the importance of overcoming or mitigating negative traffic impacts. Similarly 86% agreed that project impacts on road traffic flows and the pollution, noise and congestion resultant from tourist transport should be considered. Academics were in consensus in this regard whilst the public (77%) and operational sectors (75%) perceived this as less important.

Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) contend that the private motorcar is the most commonly used form of transport by tourists in rural areas despite the fact that vehicular gas emissions are known contributors to the greenhouse effect. Small country roads are not engineered to carry vast numbers of vehicles resulting in increased congestion and higher levels of noise and pollution (Tribe et al, 2000). Large volumes of motorised traffic also contribute to visual degradation marring the scenic beauty that is a prime motivation for visits to rural areas. Whilst the problems of private vehicle transportation can never be totally overcome, Tribe et al

(2000) argue that rural tourism operators can, through appropriate management techniques, mitigate its negative effects. Vehicle control systems, the support of public transportation and the introduction of more environmental friendly forms of transport within the area are amongst the alternative management systems that can be employed.

Criteria of Audiovisual Impacts

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should not be either visually or audibly obtrusive to other developments or the surrounding area.	3.38	3	96%	0.57	50	3.46	4	96%	3.29	3	96%
Projects should utilise development/design standards, which are sensitive to and capitalise on natural features of the area, enhancing the profile of the locality.	3.45	4	88%	0.70	45	3.59	4	89%	3.29	3	88%

Table 6.38 Criteria of Audiovisual Impacts

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of the panel agreed that rural tourism projects should not be either visually or audibly obtrusive to the surrounding area. Eighty-eight percent supported the use of development and design standards, which capitalised on the natural features of the area and enhanced the profile of the locality.

Goodall and Stabler (1997) argue that all tourism infrastructure to some extent involves the conversion of a natural into a built environment. As visitor numbers to an area increase the provision of tourist infrastructure similarly increases and levels of noise, pollution and intrusion on the natural environment are intensified (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). In many of Britain's historic towns the built environment is the primary tourist attraction with old buildings that were falling into disrepair reinvigorated for tourist use (Page and Getz, 1997). While architecturally pleasing developments are fundamental to the continued ambience that forms the basis of the

attraction for visitors to rural areas, visual pollution resulting from badly planned, aesthetically displeasing infrastructure hastens environmental decline (Page and Getz, 1997). To ensure that rural tourism projects do not result in irretrievable environmental degradation, and to expedite the amelioration of negative impacts that do occur, environmental impact assessments are advocated.

Criteria of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should fulfil EIA requirements and comply with environmental legislation in both the construction and/or operational phases.	3.73	4	96%	0.53	49	3.86	4	100%	3.57	4	91%
An integrated environmental audit should be undertaken at the outset to identify appropriate tourism options and ascertain the compatibility of projects with the surrounding land use, environment and natural resources.	3.58	4	94%	0.61	49	3.71	4	100%	3.42	4	88%

Table 6.39 Criteria of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of panellists believed that projects should fulfil EIA requirements and comply with environmental legislation in all stages of project implementation and operation. Ninety-four percent of the panel agreed that pre-implementation integrated environmental audits should be undertaken to identify appropriate tourism options and ascertain the compatibility of projects with surrounding land use. Panellists nonetheless pointed out that all rural tourism projects have some environmental impact. A British academic phrased it this way:

Depending on the nature of the project there could be environmental impacts if it's to do with a growth in activity facilities in the countryside. There are obviously issues to do with physical erosion if it's mountain biking or possibly walking. There may be specific localised areas where environmental impacts would need to be part of the criteria for assessing the feasibility of the projects.

Respondent support of EIA compliance is complementary to Hunter's (1995) argument that EIAs should be undertaken on a recurring basis throughout the planning, implementation and operation of projects. He alleges that the incorporation of EIAs from the outset are beneficial to project proponents in terms both of finance and time and posits that the process should form an integral component of project planning and design. Roberts and Hunter (1992) contend that EIAs must identify both the direct and indirect activities resultant from tourism projects. Those areas of the environment on which activities are likely to generate the greatest effect should be distinguished and both the initial and ongoing scope and scale of the impacts assessed. Butler (1999), however, alleges that whilst attention is generally given to environmental impact analysis at the onset of a project monitoring rarely continues, and the impact projections are seldom revisited during the operational phase. Simpson and Wall (1999:234) similarly contend that 'EIA often focuses upon mitigating negative impacts rather than attempting to increase beneficial impacts, and compliance monitoring is seldom performed'. The authors argue that such assessments are frequently neither cost nor time effective and adopt a one-dimensional focus neglecting to evaluate the effects of individual projects on the cumulative impacts of tourism projects on the area as a whole.

Criterion of Environmental Awareness

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should contribute to local pride in the environment, providing an incentive to local people to conserve the environment and promote higher environmental standards in their efforts to develop the tourism industry and attract visitors.	3.28	3	90%	0.64	46	3.23	3	89%	3.33	3	92%

Table 6.40 Criterion of Environmental Awareness

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety percent of the Delphi panel recognised the important role of projects in contributing to local pride in the environment thus providing an incentive to local people to adopt higher environmental standards in their efforts to develop the tourism industry in the area. The operational sector (100%), academics (92%) and the public sector (92%) perceived the importance of this criterion. To consultants (79%) it was less significant.

The point was, however, made that in South Africa poverty was the worst form of environmental pollution and that unless communities derived some economic benefit from tourism projects they were unlikely to have much respect for the environment. This argument echoes Redclift's (1992:395) contention that 'there is no point in appealing, under these circumstances, to idealism or altruism to protect the environment when the individual and household are forced to behave selfishly in their struggle to survive'. Tribe et al (2000) agree that if local communities participate in the benefits of tourism they are more likely to contribute to the conservation of the environment in an attempt to attract visitors. This contention is underpinned by the findings of research indicating that women in rural areas exhibit heightened environmental concern as the importance of the natural environment to the success of their tourism projects becomes evident (Knight, 1996).

Criterion of Environmental Relationships

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Management of the relationship with the landscape should be a critical element of all rural tourism projects which should accept the responsibility to sustain and have limited impact on the quality of the landscape/natural environment.	3.51	4	92%	0.65	47	3.48	4	85%	3.54	4	100%

Table 6.41 Criterion of Environmental Relationships

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-two percent of the panel believed that management of the relationship with the environment was a critical element of tourism development and that projects should accept the responsibility to sustain and have limited impact on the quality of the natural landscape. In particular British respondents were vocal in this regard. Projects 'should increase people's appreciation of rural Britain. So there's a sort of interpretation satisfaction element to it as well. The fact that people have more chance to engage with the countryside should be reflected' (British consultant). A British public sector member explained it this way:

Put the quality of the countryside at risk and you are affecting rural tourism prosperity as well. We need to look after our rural areas in an environmental sense as the core asset upon which many rural tourism businesses depend. They need to draw on the quality of the countryside as part of their unique selling point. There is some sort of onus that the industry itself helps, either in a campaigning way, or more directly in looking after the backdrop.

Respondents thus echo Sharpley and Sharpley's (1997:16) allegation that 'many forms of rural tourism depend on the rural environment'. The contention that rural tourism should in some way contribute to conservation of the landscape is analogous to Dowling's (2003:214) argument that 'a central tenet in the planning and development of tourism in regions is that it should support conservation of the

biophysical environment in those areas'. This, Dowling (2003) suggests, can be done either by directly involving tourists in activities related to environmental protection or by generating the fees necessary to fund conservation activities.

Criteria of Environmental Planning and Management

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Project developers/ operators should demonstrate an awareness of the potential environmental impacts of their projects through the formulation of acceptable environmental management plans and adaptive environmental management systems.	3.54	4	96%	0.64	50	3.71	4	100%	3.33	4	92%
Project investors/ developers should ensure that they are conversant with environmental principles governing developments and the importance afforded to environmental conservation in regional/local development plans.	3.49	4	94%	0.61	48	3.56	4	93%	3.42	3	96%

Table 6.42 Criteria of Environmental Planning and Management

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of the panel agreed that operators should be responsible for the formulation of acceptable environmental management plans. Ninety-four percent concurred that the onus rested on project proponents to ensure that they were conversant with local environmental principles and plans.

Respondents argued that an appropriate balance between conservation and environmental preservation on the one hand and the economic need for tourism development and business issues on the other was imperative. British interviewees emphasised the importance of visitor management propounding that while projects should increase visitor numbers, this should eventuate in a manner that did not materially affect the environment in a negative way.

Tribe et al (2000) argue that operators should adopt proactive environmental management systems in controlling tourism's impacts. In Britain, it is argued that greater environmental consciousness and voluntary environmental schemes, such as Green Globe, has led to greater numbers of tourism businesses complying with environmental guidelines and regulations and evaluating the environmental impacts of their activities (Hall, 2000). Furthermore, it is alleged that projects seen to be adopting proactive environmental policies gain competitive advantage in the marketplace (Tribe et al, 2000). However, in poverty embattled countries of the South the attitude towards environmental protection is summed up in the contention that 'the environment must not be ignored but development must not be impeded' (Biswas, 1992a:vii). The need to strike a healthy balance between environmental conservation and the development of tourism projects is fundamentally important to the rural tourism sector.

Principal Research Findings

The criteria presented and discussed in this chapter relate to the potential impacts of rural tourism projects on the sociocultural, economic and physical environment in which they are located. Overall South Africans were more supportive of the criteria. However, although there are substantial differences between rural tourism in Britain and South Africa, respondents express similar problems and share similar views. Differences in the level of support between panellists from the two countries exceeded 15% in only seven criteria (12% of the total).

Differences of opinion between panellists from the various sectors were more pronounced highlighting the subjectivity of the ratings based on the sector from which the panellist emanated. Disparities were most prominent between academics and consultants. Whilst academics are generally guided by theoretical considerations and concern for society, culture and the environment, consultants are driven by practical commercial considerations and the importance of approaching rural tourism projects first and foremost from a business perspective if they are to survive in the marketplace. It is noteworthy that an additional 32 criteria, which did not receive a sufficient degree of support for inclusion in the index of criteria developed by respondents in this thesis, each received at least 90% support from the academic

sector, a factor that emphasised the gulf existing between academics and practitioners.

The first theme in this chapter included criteria relating to the sociocultural impacts of rural tourism projects on their host community. Whilst community consultation and communication was perceived to be imperative, South Africans highlighted the difficulties that were encountered in operationalising the concept. These problems have also been recognised in the literature (for example Jamal and Getz, 2000; Tosun, 2000). Interviewees from both countries underscored the contention that expectations of the benefits of rural tourism were frequently unrealistic (See Jenkins et al, 1998; McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Sharpley, 2002). There was overall recognition of the importance of project appropriateness to the development needs, character and ambitions of the host community and an acknowledgement that undue pressure on local resources should not result in negative social impacts. Respondents also supported criteria intimating that projects should positively impact on community cultural pride and identity (See Esman, 1984; Hashimoto, 2002).

In the second theme criteria pertained to the wider economic benefits to be derived from rural tourism projects. Criteria relating to employment and income generation were widely supported while South Africans accorded higher levels of significance to issues of entrepreneurship and empowerment. The importance both of job creation and entrepreneurship have similarly been recognised in the literature (for example Koh, 2000; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The difficulties of achieving the equitable distribution of benefits were vocalised. In particular consultants highlighted that only commercially successful projects could spread wider benefits, such as employment or the creation of auxiliary entrepreneurial opportunity, to the wider community. The focus of rural tourism operators should thus be first on good business practice. Respondents also warned that projects based on altruism were unlikely to succeed. The potential of projects to boost the local economy by increasing the attractiveness of the host destination to tourists was recognised. Whilst the importance of complementarity between tourism projects and programmes in the local area was acknowledged across the panel, South Africans placed greater emphasis on the importance of project differentiation. The exigency, identified in the literature (Gannon, 1994; Roberts and Hall, 2001) of projects providing new and interesting

experiences for tourists was universally supported. South Africans were also strongly supportive of tourism route development and the fostering of good working relationships between projects and other tourism enterprises. British respondents perceived these criteria as only moderately important.

The third theme comprised environmental criteria. Although British respondents recorded higher overall ratings, there was widespread support of the criteria. Protection and conservation of the natural environment, the primary resource on which rural tourism projects are based, was recognised as elemental to the future growth and well-being of the rural tourism sector.

Concluding Points

The aim of this chapter was to establish which criteria, generated by respondents, were considered important for inclusion in a suggested index of criteria (Appendix 16) for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Criteria included in this chapter related to the macro impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment. Evidence from the findings highlights the complex web of social, economic and environmental considerations to which rural tourism projects must afford attention. Rural tourism operators must consider the sociocultural structure and environment in which projects are located. They must be mindful of the resources on which projects are based and adopt appropriate management strategies to ensure that these are conserved and sustained. They must also strive for a balance between concern for the greater good of the wider community and the economic health of their projects. However, respondents continuously reiterated that unless projects were financially sound and operated according to business principles, benefits flowing to the wider community would be constrained or non-existent and local communities would bear the costs of rural tourism development without reaping its benefits. The importance of approaching the development of rural tourism projects first and foremost from a business perspective was thus accentuated. In what follows in Chapter Seven, criteria relating to the micro business aspects of project planning and management are presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN INDEX OF CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS: THE MICRO ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses those criteria, developed by respondents, inherent to the commercial success of rural tourism projects at the individual project level. Criteria in this chapter are consolidated into three themes. The first theme encompasses the planning of rural tourism projects. This is followed in the second theme by criteria relating to project management. The third theme focuses on criteria pertaining to marketing. Results of the Delphi Survey (Appendix 13) are supported by Delphi panellist comments and the findings of fieldwork conducted in Britain and South Africa between October 2002 and April 2003. The presentation of results commences with an overview of sectoral ratings of the proposed criteria pertaining to project planning.

Rural Tourism Projects - Planning Criteria

South Africans were marginally more supportive than British panellists of the criteria in this theme. In three criteria there was 100% consensus amongst panellists whilst differences between the two countries did not exceed 15% in any criterion. Table 7.1 reflects the percentage of the project planning criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
71%	63%	71%	74%

Table 7.1 Percentage of project planning criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

As indicated by these results, the level of support between sectors with regard to criteria in this theme was well balanced. The increased level of support from consultants was particularly notable. Criteria pertaining to all aspects of planning were well received with panellists recognising that sound planning was elemental to project success. In keeping with their overall support for the criteria, panellists averred that to fulfil their purpose plans should be continually monitored, evaluated and modified.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT PLANNING CRITERIA**Criteria of Planning Principles**

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Attention to detail should be accorded to all aspects of planning, logistics and implementation	3.57	4	98%	0.55	48	3.68	4	96%	3.43	3	100%
Projects should adopt an integrated approach with all plans synthesised into a coherent planning, delivery and monitoring model.	3.38	4	88%	0.75	45	3.55	4	89%	3.17	3	88%
Alternative planning scenarios and support systems should be in place enabling unexpected problems to be dealt with.	3.23	3	87%	0.67	45	3.43	4	93%	3.00	3	79%

Table 7.2Criteria of Planning Principles

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists (98%) were firm in their belief that attention to detail should be accorded to all aspects of planning, logistics and implementation. Eighty-eight percent of the panel recognised the importance of the integration and synthesis of plans into a coherent planning, delivery and monitoring model. Academics were unanimous in supporting this criterion. To consultants (79%) it was not fundamentally important. Ninety-three percent of South Africans believed that alternative planning scenarios should be in place in the event of unexpected problems. British panellists accorded this criterion less support (79%). South African support for this criterion can be explained by the fact that the current insecurity relating to land claims and, in the case of community-based projects, the intractability of community leaders who oppose particular aspects of a proposal, could necessitate the adoption of alternative scenarios in order to implement a project.

Respondents' recognition of the importance of synthesising plans into one coherent, planning, delivery and monitoring model are analogous with the Metaplan (1999:2) definition of the objective of a project plan as developing 'a document that contains all the necessary project information'. Fundamental elements of project planning include feasibility studies and the completion of business, financial and marketing plans. The rationale for sound planning is well articulated in the assertion that:

The point of planning is to know our destination and then choose the most desirable and feasible path to get there. Often, circumstances force us to take a different path, but that doesn't necessarily change our destination. Plans help us keep the destination in sharp focus even as we consider different paths to get there. Without them, we risk losing our way (Resource Management Systems, 2001).

There is, however, evidence both from respondents and the literature (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999) that small tourism operators seldom formulate efficient plans. Ensuring project compliance with government regulation is an important element of project planning.

Criteria of Compliance

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Rural tourism projects should comply with regional/local land-use planning ensuring that new projects do not result in displacements in the area.	3.35	4	90%	0.76	47	3.32	3	93%	3.38	4	88%
Project investors and developers should adhere to resource management and development guidelines. (For example, consents required for water, subdivision, coastal development etc.)	3.46	4	87%	0.87	45	3.50	4	86%	3.42	4	88%
Projects should be planned within a national/ regional/ local development policy, planning and regulatory context.	3.23	4	83%	0.83	43	3.25	4	79%	3.21	3	88%

Table 7.3 Criteria of Compliance

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety percent of panellists agreed that rural tourism projects should comply with existing land-use plans and should not result in displacements in the area. Eighty seven percent recognised the importance of projects adhering to government development and resource management guidelines. British panellists (88%) were more supportive of the criterion that projects should be planned within policy, planning and regulatory contexts than were South Africans (79%). It was the operational sector (62%) that had the greatest reservations about this criterion.

Panellist comments exhibited scepticism with regard to the adaptability, appropriateness and degree of imagination of existing public sector plans and emphasised the need for continuous monitoring, evaluation and modification to ensure their appropriateness to changing local circumstances. In general such plans

were perceived as inadequate, unimaginative and bureaucratic. It was also argued that land-use policy and plans should be based upon weighing the best option and greatest benefit to local people.

These arguments are analogous to the World Tourism Organisation (1994) contention that decisions regarding land-use policy should be based upon an analysis of the most beneficial options. As discussed in Chapter Two, land-use policy is perceived as a powerful tool available to government in controlling tourism development (Green, 1995; Hall and Jenkins, 1995). This is particularly relevant in rural areas where conservation of the natural environment is an optimum consideration (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Allegations that environmental impact project monitoring is rarely undertaken are indicative that there is limited control over project adherence to resource management guidelines (Butler, 1999; Simpson and Wall, 1999). Similar accusations are sounded by respondents in relation to the implementation of evaluation discussed in Chapter Eight. The first step in project planning is the design of a conceptual framework.

Criterion of Conceptual Planning

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
The conceptual framework within which a project is developed should be attractive and subject to the regular assessments, fine-tuning and innovation required to ensure the constant growth/revitalisation demanded by the dynamics of tourism.	3.19	3	84%	0.71	41	3.43	4	89%	2.89	3	76%

Table 7.4 Criterion of Conceptual Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

South Africans (89%) believed that an attractive project concept, regularly fine-tuned to innovate and meet the dynamics of tourism, was important. British panellists (76%) perceived this to be of less significance.

Inskeep (1991: 439) distinguishes conceptual planning as an essential first step in project planning. It is further argued that the conceptual framework of a project must be attractive to its potential target market and differentiate it from its competitors as opposed to being what is described as a 'me too type of product' (Morrison et al, 1999:182). Morrison et al (1999:182) also point out that 'concept flexibility' in terms of price and service can be a valuable means of securing competitive edge. By virtue of innovation projects can thus contribute to longer visitor stays, increased expenditure and an enhanced visitor experience. The criteria that follow pertain to project feasibility.

Criteria of Project Feasibility

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be financially viable and structured so that they are in a position to attain economic self-sufficiency and self-sustainability beyond the start-up period.	3.81	4	100%	0.40	52	3.79	4	100%	3.83	4	100%
Feasibility studies/ force-field analyses, which assess the potential long-term feasibility and viability of projects, should be undertaken.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	48	3.73	4	96%	3.68	4	100%
Projects should be justifiable in terms of cost-benefit ratio, profitability and short and medium-term return on investment.	3.65	4	98%	0.53	47	3.73	4	96%	3.55	4	100%

Table 7.5 Criteria of Project Feasibility

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists were in consensus that projects should be financially viable and in a position to attain self-sufficiency and self-sustainability beyond the start-up period. Ninety-eight percent agreed that feasibility studies/force-field analyses determining the long-term feasibility/viability of projects should be undertaken. Ninety-eight percent of the panel also contended that projects should be justifiable in terms of profitability and return on investment. British panellists were unanimous in their agreement to all three criteria.

Panellists from both countries emphasised the necessity of feasibility studies, financial viability and sound business principles as the basis of any project and pointed out that without financial viability projects would not survive and none of the spin-off benefits of tourism would accrue to host communities. The opinion was also expressed that too little attention was paid to feasibility studies and that the approach to rural tourism project development tended to be ad hoc. As a British operator phrased it, many rural tourism operators 'take a hunch and go with it, some are losers and some are winners'. A prospective respondent who declined to participate in this study corroborated this contention claiming that:

Taking a pragmatic and practical approach as we did to rural tourism the sustainable factor was of little front-end importance. From an economic development/job creation aspect you throw some projects at the wall, some of them stick, the non-viable ones fail, someone buys the business at a cheap viable rate – hey presto another success everyone down at the pub. The sustainability then gets incorporated into the business plan. I know it shouldn't be this way but... (British academic).

Members of the focus group were vociferous on the topic of economic self-sufficiency. They argued that assisting people to develop tourism projects with the expectation of continual funding is counter-productive. 'Project developers must take accountability for their projects, funding should only be a kick-start. Too much funding creates dependency'. In Britain it was also recognised that whilst there was a need for sufficient funding, this should not create financial dependency. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, it is the inability to access seed-capital in the first place that is the overriding problem for many rural tourism operators.

Interviewees in both countries recognised a variety of exogenous and endogenous factors that impact on the financial feasibility of rural tourism projects. Endogenous factors included the level of entrepreneurial skills, experience, marketing nous and financial acumen of the project operators. Exogenous factors included issues such as climate, current tourism trends and the international security situation. Consideration of the variation in basic costs in remote areas was also deemed important. 'Is the business in the right place in relation to perceived markets and to co-operative activities going on in the area. Is it in the right place in terms of support available? In many remote areas petrol at filling stations becomes more expensive and that can have an inhibiting effect' (British academic).

Respondents comments are complementary to Moutinho's (2000) contention that no plan will be functional unless it is based on recognition and understanding of the external and internal factors that impact on the environment in which a tourism business operates. However, the difficulties in procuring information renders research problematic for small rural tourism operators and underpins the role of the public sector as 'information provider'.

Inskip (1991) agrees that location is paramount in planning for tourism projects. Distance from major tourism markets, ability to fit into multi-destination tours, potential for networking with projects in neighbouring areas or regions, and ease and cost of access are all factors to be considered. Where adventure tourism activities are pursued access to emergency facilities is an important consideration. Climate is an overriding concern where activities such as skiing or water-based activities form the attraction on which projects are based. All these are factors that will ultimately impact upon the financial feasibility of projects.

Wanhill (1994) points out the importance of understanding the difference between assessing project feasibility and viability. He explains that whilst a project may be financially feasible in that there will be surplus income over costs, where loan funding has been utilised it may not be viable in that the income generated is insufficient to repay the initial loan or investment. The type of project also governs its viability. For example, those with investments in superstructure have the possibility of capital appreciation. Some superstructure is, however, difficult to put to

other use, a factor that will impact on the degree of capital appreciation the project might enjoy (Wanhill, 1994). Whilst profitability factors are important to project investors, the cost-benefit analysis, in which the environmental, sociocultural and economic costs and benefits of projects to the local community are weighed up, is important to the local authority in deciding whether planning approval or licences should be granted (Mill and Morrison, 1992). Certain pre-implementation activities are also integral to project feasibility. These include the resolution of potential problems and consultation with the relevant authorities.

Criterion of Problem Resolution

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Potential problems should be resolved before projects are implemented. For example, security of land tenure, provision of housing and services for employees, guaranteed access to resources required for project activities).	3.59	4	94%	0.61	48	3.64	4	93%	3.52	4	96%

Table 7.6 Criterion of Problem Resolution

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Delphi panellists (94%) perceived the solving of potential problems prior to project implementation as extremely important. However, respondents made no further comments on this criterion.

It is important that project proponents identify potential problems early in the planning process. For example, it is alleged that poor housing supply is a contributing factor to the problems experienced by rural tourism operators in recruiting and retaining personnel. This is particularly applicable in more remote locations where alternative housing might not be available (Getz and Page, 1997). Similarly many rural tourism activities are dependant on access to mountains, rivers

or traditional fishing or hunting grounds. Facilitating such access is essential to project feasibility.

Criterion of Consultation

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
There should be consultation with the relevant authorities at an early stage of proposal planning to secure participation in or approval of projects and facilitate collaboration between project managers and such authorities.	3.56	4	94%	0.61	47	3.57	4	93%	3.54	4	95%

Table 7.7 Criterion of Consultation.

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Consultation with relevant authorities at an early stage in the planning process in order to ensure collaboration and approval for projects was highly rated by panellists (94%). Proposed projects may require approval from a range of different authorities. These include planning authorities, licensing authorities administering both business licences and the permits required for activities such as hunting or fishing (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998), and environmental authorities where environmental impact studies are required prior to project implementation. In many less-developed countries traditional leaders serve as decision-makers on behalf of their communities (Timothy, 2002). Consultation with such leaders is imperative if projects seek community participation or utilisation of resources such as land or the local culture. The following criteria pertain to financial planning.

Criteria of Financial Planning

	SA/ UK x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	UK x	M	%
Projects should have financial plans with accurate cost and revenue targets based on realistic predictions.	3.81	4	100%	0.40	52	3.79	4	100%	3.83	4	100%
Where relevant financial plans should identify funding opportunities and develop action plans to ensure continuous resource mobilisation apposite to the level of funding required for project implementation and maintenance.	3.54	4	98%	0.54	49	3.56	4	100%	3.52	4	96%
Sufficient capital should be set aside to make provision for pre-opening expenses such as start-up marketing or staff training.	3.69	4	96%	0.54	50	3.75	4	96%	3.63	4	96%
Revenue projections should take into account seasonality and be based on current volumes of business in the region.	3.63	4	94%	0.60	49	3.68	4	93%	3.58	4	96%
The operating/maintenance costs of projects should be adequately estimated and provided for.	3.60	4	94%	0.66	49	3.54	4	93%	3.67	4	96%
Capital costs and cash flow analysis should be realistic in view of the long period before tourism projects begin to show dividends.	3.54	4	94%	0.67	49	3.71	4	100%	3.33	4	88%

Table 7.8 Criteria of Financial Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists were unanimous in their agreement that projects should have financial plans governed by realism. They also agreed (98%) that financial plans should both identify funding opportunities and develop action plans to ensure adequate funding for project implementation and maintenance. Setting aside sufficient capital for pre-

opening expenses was considered important by 96% of the panel. Ninety-four percent acknowledged the importance of factoring the problems of seasonality into revenue projections and agreed that these should be based on current volumes of tourism business in the region. Ninety-four percent of the panel also recognised that operating and maintenance costs should be adequately estimated and provided for. Similarly ninety-four percent agreed that capital costs and cash flow analysis should be detailed and realistic in view of the long period before the projects generated financial returns.

Interviewees passed few, but nonetheless pertinent, remarks endorsing the fact that financial acumen and planning was fundamental to project success. The need for realism in estimating financial requirements and the length of time it took for projects to become profitable was also emphasised. A British academic summed-up the financial realities of rural tourism projects this way:

One of the problems with rural tourism businesses is that they do tend to pop-up and go out of business pretty quickly. If they don't establish themselves within a relatively short time they tend not to make it. So, there is a bit of a vicious circle there in terms of duration.

Despite respondent support, adherence to the financial planning criteria is generally perceived as limited in the small business sector that comprises the bulk of rural tourism operations. For example, Morrison et al (1999) point out that underestimating initial operating and capital costs in new small tourism businesses is commonplace and is the precursor to cash flow problems from the outset. In a study undertaken amongst rural nature-based tourism operators, McKercher and Robbins (1998) found evidence of widespread lack of realism with regard to revenue projections, estimates of the time before projects attained profitability and ultimate financial success. Furthermore, new operators frequently failed to define clear goals for their projects. Operators, asked to identify things that they wished they had known prior to embarking on their projects, confirmed Brownlie's (1994) contention that one of the most crucial skills is the ability to accurately manage cash flow.

Bridge and Moutinho (2000) similarly stress the imperative of accurate cost and revenue targets based on realistic tourist numbers and estimates of operational

requirements. They also highlight the need to balance capital requirements against the availability and costs of procuring funding. Inadequate accounting procedures, failure to manage finances on a day-to-day basis and weak cash flow management have proved to be a significant reason for business failure, exacerbating the reluctance of financial institutions, such as banks, to fund rural tourism projects (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999). The final criterion in this theme pertains to the formulation of business plans.

Criterion of Business Planning

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Up-to-date, long-term business plans which concentrate on basic deliverables should be formulated and adhered to.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	50	3.71	4	96%	3.70	4	100%

Table 7.9 Criteria of Business Planning

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The imperative of up-to-date, long-term business plans was recognised across the panel (98%). South Africa interviewees argued that a primary criterion for the pre-implementation evaluation of rural tourism projects should be a pragmatic assessment of the business plan. As an operator phrased it 'you get a sense then of how well the homework has been done'. British interviewees agreed that the first question that should be asked of project proponents would be whether they had developed a proper business plan. That many rural tourism operators lack the capacity to prepare such plans has been discussed in Chapter Five.

The lack of business planning skills in South Africa can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the population have not received appropriate education. In Britain, interviewees alleged that rural tourism operators often embarked on projects as a hobby and repeatedly claimed that many rural tourism enterprises were lifestyle businesses rather than serious players and that this became obvious in some of the business plans that they produced. 'Most are lifestyle businesses, which really run at

a loss probably or just run six months of the year ...they just do it for the quality of life. That's probably 80% of the tourism industry in the county' (British public sector).

Respondents' views thus underpin Morrison et al's (1999:152) contention that many tourism entrepreneurs 'have little or no business acumen, just a love of the activity. Where there is such deep feeling, judgement may become very cloudy'. Evidence of the lack of business knowledge and skills in both South Africa and Britain has been discussed in Chapter Five. Findings are in agreement with Roberts and Hall's (2001:190) contention that 'rural tourism operators require support, guidance and assistance in order to plan business operations'. Evidence of studies amongst small tourism operators provides evidence that long-term business plans, updated and adjusted on a yearly basis are seldom prepared (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999). The second theme in this chapter pertains to criteria relating to project management.

Rural Tourism Projects - Project Management Criteria

South Africans were more supportive than British panellists of criteria in this theme. Variances between panellists from the two countries were higher in this section with differences exceeding 15% in five criteria. Table 7.10 reflects the percentage of the project management criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
59%	54%	54%	73 %

Table 7.10

Percentage of project management criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

Whilst the level of support for criteria in this theme was reasonably balanced between the academic, public and consultant sectors, the operational sector was substantially more supportive. Although the decreased level of support from academics is notable, it is in only two criteria that academic consensus registered below 80%. The high level of support from the operational sector is indicative of the importance of management criteria to those involved at the coalface of the rural tourism sector. Contradictorily, the operational sector also registered the lowest level of support in 23% of the criteria in this theme, more than any other sector. The first criteria in this theme pertain to general operations management

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT MANAGEMENT CRITERIA**Criteria of Operational Management**

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should adopt efficient operational controls and financial management systems.	3.60	4	96%	0.57	50	3.68	4	96%	3.50	4	96%
Projects should conduct their business honestly communicating business policies and inviting customers, suppliers and contractors to give feedback.	3.52	4	88%	0.75	46	3.61	4	89%	3.42	4	88%
Management structures should be formulated to deal with issues such as the allocation of roles and responsibilities and the identification of key personnel.	3.35	4	88%	0.68	46	3.46	4	89%	3.21	3	88%

Table 7.11 Criteria of Operational Management

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The need for projects to adopt efficient operational and financial controls and systems was highly rated by 96% of the panel. Conducting business in an honest and transparent manner, communicating business policies and inviting feedback from customers, suppliers and contractors, was supported by 88% of the panel. Academics (100%) and the operational sector (92%) were particularly supportive of this criterion. Eighty-eight percent of panellists acknowledged the importance of management structures formulated to deal with issues such as roles and responsibilities. The significance of this criterion was particularly recognised by the academic sector (100%). The importance accorded this criterion corresponds with the Metaplan (1999) contention that organisational elements such as the allocation of roles, responsibilities and authorities and the formulation of operating procedures are an integral facet of project planning and management. Although supportive of these criteria British respondents offered no additional comments.

It is argued that small tourism operators, who comprise a significant proportion of the rural tourism sector, generally lack both formal management systems and a proficiency in operational management (Brownlie, 1994). Lack of experience and

understanding of tourism industry practice with regard to issues such as commissions and pricing, is also a common feature (Getz and Page, 1997; McKercher and Robbins, 1998). Findings of this study, reported in Chapter Five, reinforce Middleton's argument that the problems associated with management and the failure of many tourism enterprises is indicative of the need for public sector policy that offers 'support with marketing, financial management and management training generally' (Middleton, 2001:200). There is, however, evidence that managers of small tourism operations rarely undergo training (Thomas et al, 2000).

South African panellists were vocal on the issue of roles and responsibilities claiming that collaborative projects involving the local community were more likely to succeed when driven by a champion with a vested interest. It was also claimed that to obviate friction one individual in a community had to be the driver and take responsibility. Focus group members alleged that in South Africa women had proved to be 'more resilient, reliable, enduring, responsible' and that it was generally they who took 'ownership' of projects, despite the fact that in traditional indigenous communities it was men who still held power. Joppe (1996), however, confirms that the need for a community champion also extends to the developed world arguing that in order to be successful community-based rural tourism projects are in need of a strong, dedicated leader.

Criteria of Human Resource Management

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should be sound in terms of a source of trainable staff and personnel sustainability and in their ability to inject external expertise where skills are lacking.	3.20	3	82%	0.73	41	3.46	4	89%	2.86	3	73%
Projects should function as agents of human resource development with plans that make provision for purposeful, appropriate, employee training.	3.14	3	78%	0.86	39	3.48	4	93%	2.74	3	61%

Table 7.12 Criteria of Human Resource Management

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

South Africans (89%), operating in an environment in which lack of education and skills is prevalent in rural areas, perceived the availability of trainable staff and access to external expertise as more important than British panellists (73%). In recognition of the prevailing skills deficit South Africans (93%) accepted that projects had a responsibility for staff development. British panellists (61%) did not agree.

Despite British panellists awarding the criteria limited support, research amongst a nationwide sample of small tourism and hospitality firms indicated that 31% of the firms surveyed in Britain had experienced recruitment difficulties in the past twelve months (Thomas et al, 2000). The primary reason stated for this was the lack of skills and experience amongst applicants. In South Africa staff development, in particular training members of disadvantaged communities, is accepted as a social responsibility. The lack of British support for this criterion is reflected in the findings of research amongst small tourism operations (Thomas et al, 2000), which indicated

that 60% had no formal staff training plans. Forty-six percent of those sampled, however, professed to offer 'on-the-job' training.

Page and Getz (1997) claim that both the availability and the competence of labour is a universal problem for rural tourism operators. The lack of a skilled workforce and the difficulties of training in rural areas have been extensively discussed in Chapter Five. A well-trained, high quality workforce is however fundamental to the success of rural tourism projects since, as Nickson (2000) argues, the quality of the tourist experience is to a significant degree dependent on guest interaction with staff. The maintenance of high quality standards is equally important to the commercial success of rural tourism projects.

Criterion of Quality Management

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Quality management should be incorporated in all aspects of project execution.	3.59	4	96%	0.59	47	3.65	4	96%	3.52	4	96%

Table 7.13 Criterion of Quality Management

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The introduction of quality management in all aspects of project execution was viewed as imperative by 96% of the panel. These findings complement Stabler's (1994) argument that setting up a quality assessment system can assist any tourism enterprise, large or small, to maintain quality control and differentiate itself from its competitors thereby gaining competitive advantage. As pointed out in Chapter Two there is, however, evidence that quality management systems are not afforded priority amongst small tourism and hospitality businesses in Britain (Thomas et al, 1998).

Criterion of Tourism Standards

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Project proponents should accept world tourism standards ensuring that products and services meet tourist demands and expectations within the parameters of the environment in which they are developed.	3.22	3	86%	0.74	43	3.41	4	93%	3.00	3	78%

Table 7.14 Criterion of Tourism Standards

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Whilst 93% of South Africans believed that projects should strive to meet world tourism standards and tourist expectations within the parameters of the environment in which they are developed, British panellists perceived this as less relevant 78%. The public and operational sectors (92%), however, rated this criterion highly. Consultants (71%) thought it was less important.

Stabler (1994: 266) concludes that 'for the purposes of appraising tourism developments, quality can be defined as their characteristics which enhance the tourist's experience'. Developing and maintaining high standards in rural tourism projects is fundamental to meeting tourist expectations, maintaining visitor satisfaction and offering what the tourist perceives as value for money. Maintaining quality, Stabler (1994) argues, spans two dimensions. The first refers to physical quality such as that of buildings, equipment or vehicles and is relatively easy to measure. The second dimension comprises service quality, which is more difficult to evaluate.

Criterion of Physical Quality

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Vigilant attention should be given to ensuring the cleanliness of food preparation.	3.63	4	90%	0.66	47	3.50	4	82%	3.79	4	100%
Clean, comfortable accommodation should be of a type apposite to the experience, attractions and other facilities.	3.35	4	85%	0.79	44	3.32	4	79%	3.38	3	92%

Table 7.15 Criterion of Physical Quality

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

British panellists unanimously perceived the cleanliness of food preparation as essential. Eighty-two percent of the South African panellists were of a similar opinion. Ninety-two percent of the British panellists agreed that clean, comfortable accommodation should be of a type apposite to the experience and other facilities. South Africans (79%) perceived this as less critical. Both academic (92%) and operational sectors (92%) perceived the criterion as important. To consultants it was of less significance (71%).

Grefe (1994) emphasises the importance of quality rural accommodation and argues that if maximum advantage is to be derived from tourism, a professional approach to quality is imperative. Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer (1994:49), who contend that future rural tourists will favour 'accommodation which is original and typical for the area' together with fresh, high quality locally produced food, agree that all rural tourism supply should maintain high standards. In order to encourage high levels of quality, the development of standards and certification procedures for classifying rural tourism operations has been advocated (Getz and Page, 1997).

Criteria of Service Quality

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should aim to provide excellent service.	3.58	4	96%	0.57	50	3.71	4	93%	3.42	3	100%
Active response should be made to complaints from tourists.	3.56	4	92%	0.64	48	3.57	4	89%	3.54	4	96%
Tourists should receive objective and honest information about all aspects of their visit.	3.60	4	90%	0.66	47	3.64	4	96%	3.54	4	83%
Projects should demonstrate local hospitality and indigenous knowledge thereby engendering a more genuine welcome for visitors.	3.23	3	88%	0.65	46	3.32	3	89%	3.13	3	88%
Reservation and payment systems for tourists should be easy and efficient.	3.26	4	84%	0.81	43	3.66	4	96%	2.79	3	71%

Table 7.16 Criteria of Service Quality

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Ninety-six percent of the panel agreed that projects should aim to provide excellent service and make tourists feel welcome. Making active response to tourist complaints was essential to 92% of panellists. Ninety percent recognized the importance of tourists receiving objective, honest information about all aspects of their visit. Eighty-eight percent of the panel believed that projects should demonstrate local hospitality and indigenous knowledge engendering a more genuine welcome for visitors. The operational sector was in consensus in this regard. South Africans (96%) perceived easy and efficient reservation and payment systems as important. Only 71% of British panellists agreed. To academics (67%) it was also relatively insignificant. The difference between South African and British panellists can be attributed to the fact that in marginalized rural areas in South Africa communication systems are extremely poor. This causes significant problems for rural tourism operators. Many small operators will also not accept payment by credit card or travellers' cheques making it difficult for international travellers. The generally

strong support across the panel for criteria pertaining to service management was well summed-up by a South African public sector panellist:

In any tourism project every effort must be made to ensure the highest level of visitor satisfaction because in the long run it is word-of-mouth customer satisfaction which will win the day and which will encourage other tourists to visit the facility.

Overall, product and service quality were highly rated by both the focus group and interviewees. In the focus group the need for rural areas to develop an excellent holistic product was emphasised as was the fact that excellence should extend to all facets of supply including service delivery, the provision of good quality gastronomic offerings and a diversity of new, exciting and interesting activities. Interviewees made the point that each project visited has an impact and that the quality of a project, how well it is managed and the people involved are all important aspects of the total visitor experience. A British academic posed a two-sided argument to the quality debate. On the one hand he argued that rural tourism lacks professionalism with the result that quality suffers and rural tourism projects do not attract and retain customers. On the other hand he alleged that an amateur, genuine local approach of rural tourism management, which incorporates local cultural aspects, is actually attractive and part of the rustic appeal of rural tourism. Ultimately, he maintained, it depended on which approach provided a quality experience for the tourist. Members of the focus group expressed the view that ‘people make tourism great’, an assertion congruent to Mckercher and Robbins’ (1998) contention that tourism is a ‘people business’.

The general perception amongst interviewees was that projects should be customer driven and that both product and service quality were of optimum importance. A South African operator phrased it this way ‘you can get away with anything if you give customers what they want’ and claimed that ‘continuous figuring out what people want and pulling out every stop to give it to them’ was crucial. A British public sector interviewee expressed it in these words:

I would put quality as number one actually. Quality products that people are keen to come and enjoy and come back again and again. That's the direction we've got to go. We've got to drive the whole thing upwards in terms of the quality of the experience in all its many attributes.

Even so interviewees pointed out that whilst achieving customer satisfaction was a significant criterion from a business perspective, getting a comparable benchmarking measure of customer satisfaction was difficult. Respondents, however, agreed with Stabler (1994) that excellent quality and the degree of customer satisfaction would be reflected in financial success.

Respondent views support Roberts and Hall's (2001) argument that in order to achieve competitive advantage and differentiate the project from others in the area, excellent quality and service standards must relate to the fulfilment of customer needs and expectations. Meeting these expectations is to a large degree dependent on the ability to offer the diversity and range of product sought by tourists. Morrison et al (1999), however, allege that it is close interaction with their clients that keeps small entrepreneurs in touch with understanding customers' wants rather than any quality system. South Africans generally are concerned with achieving what are perceived as 'world standards' in the hospitality sector since poor service standards are propounded as a root cause of the drop in the country's incoming tourism figures in the late 1990s (Bennett, 1999). An integral element of maintaining customer satisfaction is ensuring their safety.

Criteria of Safety and Security

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
The safety and security of tourists should be considered of paramount importance.	3.63	4	94%	0.60	48	3.75	4	93%	3.48	4	96%
The safety and security of host communities and project staff should be taken into account.	3.35	3	92%	0.62	48	3.64	4	100%	3.00	3	83%

Table 7.17 Criteria of Safety and Security

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

That the safety and security of tourists should be considered paramount was endorsed by 94% of the panel. Ninety-two percent also considered the safety and security of host communities and project staff to be imperative. This criterion was of particular significance to South Africans (100%). Focus group members argued that tourism could help to eliminate the problems of crime and vandalism. This argument has validity if government policy can ensure more equitable benefits of rural tourism also to those members of communities battling the forces of poverty and unemployment.

As discussed in Chapter Two, while some arguments propound that an increase in tourism tends to run parallel with an increase in crime (Davidson and Maitland, 1997; Mathieson and Wall, 1982), other research has found that tourism is not perceived to have contributed appreciably to either crime or lawlessness (Jones and Mawby, 2002). However, in areas of poverty where communities feel that they are not sharing in the benefits of tourism there is always a danger of tourists becoming the victims of crime (George, 2003). Ensuring that adequate policing, organisational arrangements and well-formulated crisis management plans are in place to deal with contingencies in this field are essential.

From a different perspective panellists pointed out that for participants in rural adventure tourism activities some danger was frequently considered attractive. Grant (2001:169), however, cautions that 'being aware of the risks does not mean that clients have less of an expectation of operators to manage them on their behalf'. Ryan (1997) also highlights the importance of client safety pointing out that in New Zealand, for example, litigation following death or injury to a client could lead to a project being forced out of business. With the stringent European Union regulations the same would be applicable in Britain.

Panellists across the board generally acknowledged the importance of criteria in the planning and management themes. This was well enunciated by a South African public sector panellist:

The importance of project planning and management cannot be overstressed. Right from the pre-planning feasibility study it is vital to get it right. Any mistakes made in planning and positioning a project will affect its efficient management, organisation and operation and mistakes made in those areas will affect its marketing and its final success as a tourist attraction resulting in a poor experience and poor feedback into the marketplace.

Whilst the reasons for diversification into rural tourism may differ between Britain and South Africa, there is nonetheless evidence that the skills required to plan, manage and operate successful rural tourism projects are deficient in both countries. The final theme in this chapter encompasses criteria relating to the marketing of rural tourism projects.

Rural Tourism Projects – Marketing Criteria

South Africans were more supportive than British panellists of the criteria in this theme (Appendix 13). However, differences between the two countries exceeded 15% in only one criterion. Table 7.18 reflects the percentage of the marketing criteria in which individual sectors achieved a consensus threshold of 87%.

Academics	Public Sector	Consultants	Operational Sector
57%	64 %	57 %	79%

Table 7.18 Percentage of marketing criteria with a sectoral consensus threshold of 87%.

Support for criteria in the marketing theme was reasonably balanced between the academic, public and consultant sectors. Operational sector support was substantially higher (79%). The high ratings recorded by the operational sector are indicative of the importance accorded by operators to marketing in ensuring the commercial success of rural tourism projects. An exception was a criterion relating to compliance with the regional marketing strategy. In this criterion the operational sector (69%) registered the lowest level of support. Scepticism of the appropriateness of public sector plans and strategies, documented both in Chapter Five and earlier in this chapter, was prevalent throughout the findings of this research. The first criteria in this theme pertain to market research.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED MARKETING CRITERIA

Criteria of Market Research

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Appropriate existing and potential future target markets for rural tourism in general and for the destination and project in particular should be identified, compared, quantified and qualified.	3.53	4	92%	0.64	47	3.61	4	93%	3.43	4	91%
Comparable competitive tourism projects and their strengths and weaknesses should be identified.	3.32	3	92%	0.69	47	3.48	4	93%	3.13	3	92%
The level of project attractiveness to tour operators and tour guides and the degree of tourism industry support should be ascertained.	3.41	4	92%	0.65	47	3.61	4	93%	3.19	3	91%

Table 7. 19 Criteria of Market Research

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The panel (92%) recognised the necessity of market segmentation. Competitor analysis (92%) was also considered imperative. Ascertaining the attractiveness of the project to tour operators and tour guides and the level of support that could be expected from the tourism industry was considered important across the board (92%).

Respondents were vociferous in their discussion of market related criteria. Operational panellists were adamant that market testing was essential and that speaking to potential visitors and clients and listening to what they say is critical 'they are the ones who really will make the project sink or swim, so theirs should be the overall guide' (South African operator). Throughout the focus group and South African interviews the lack of good market research and the danger that rural tourism projects tended to be ad hoc and supply led rather than demand driven was

highlighted. Focus group members argued that it was necessary for project proponents and operators to understand demand before implementing a project and highlighted that in the dynamic tourism environment it was imperative to keep pace with trends and change. South African interviewees repeated the concerns of the focus group alleging that projects must be totally market and business driven and expressing the concern that too often they were supply based. A consultant's comments summed the arguments up pithily. 'What evidence is there that project proponents have identified and understand the market and is there evidence for a sufficient flow of visitors to make it financially viable?' A lack of market related advice and understanding of market segmentation were highlighted as major constraints.

The necessity and difficulty of securing tour operator support for projects was emphasised by South African public sector interviewees and operators alike. Operators alleged that tour operators were wary of supporting new rural tourism projects thus minimising their chances of survival. It was, however, also claimed that the best advice in setting up a project often comes from tour operators. Academic and public sector interviewees argued that tour operators are an important link to provide feedback on market trends, target markets and visitor satisfaction and that 'tour operators will support new projects when they fill a gap in the market' (South African public sector).

British interviewees reiterated South African emphasis that an understanding of market segmentation was crucial. The identification of new markets and analysing and understanding the competition was also perceived as extremely important. The question of lack of marketing capacity was, however, reiterated. In the words of a British consultant 'many small operators do not recognise the importance of information, are not aware how to access it and would not know how to use it. This is especially true of market information'. British interviewees agreed that it was imperative that projects were market led. For example, asked what he considered the most important criteria for evaluating rural tourism projects a British academic replied 'having a product for which there is a demand, along with good human resource training, adequate investment and decent marketing. There's no point in having something if there's no demand for it'.

Interviewees from both countries stressed the importance of developing what the customer wanted as opposed to what the operator perceived they wanted. Researching, understanding and then building on the customer's interest was the crucial factor. A British public sector interviewee phrased it this way:

Do they want to develop fishing because that's what they think the customer needs? Have they thought of the customer rather than the product? Are they seeing this as a hobby because they enjoy it so they think everyone else enjoys it, a lifestyle rather than as a business. Because they enjoy walking they think that everyone else enjoys walking and therefore want to set up as a walking company.

Respondent recognition of the importance of market research, and their simultaneous acknowledgement that many rural tourism projects are supply-led, is congruent to the literature in which the importance of market segmentation studies, and operator neglect to undertake them, is highlighted (Gilbert, 1989; McKercher and Robbins, 1998). Identification of the importance of researching tour operator needs similarly underpins the recognition by both academics and practitioners of the crucial role that can be played by tour operators in contributing to the commercial success of rural tourism projects (Rossouw, 1999; Sharpley, 2002; Wanhill, 1997). There is also evidence that failure to engage with the needs of tour operators can ultimately lead to the collapse of projects (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003). Having identified the potential market, planning a marketing strategy is the next important step for rural tourism operators.

Criteria of Market Planning

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
A robust, appropriate strategic marketing plan based on up-to-date market research should be formulated.	3.69	4	98%	0.51	51	3.79	4	100%	3.58	4	96%
Funds for adequate marketing should be realistically estimated and allocated.	3.56	4	96%	0.57	50	3.64	4	93%	3.46	3	100%
Marketing expertise should be available to projects either in-house or externally for facilitation in market planning and implementation.	3.48	4	90%	0.67	47	3.61	4	93%	3.33	4	88%
Projects should have a well-developed and marketable theme	3.29	4	87%	0.75	45	3.43	4	89%	3.13	3	83%
Marketing plans should be compatible with the vision encompassed within the regional marketing co-operation strategy.	3.17	3	85%	.73	44	3.29	3	89%	3.04	3	79%

Table 7.20 Criteria of Market Planning

SR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode %= Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

The importance of well-resourced marketing plans based on up-to-date research was recognised by 98% of the panel. Ninety-six percent perceived the importance of the realistic estimation and allocation of marketing funds. The need of access to marketing expertise was also well supported by panellists (90%). Eighty-seven percent of panellists agreed that projects should have a well-developed, marketable theme. Eighty-nine percent of the South African panellists agreed that projects should be compatible with the vision encompassed within the regional marketing strategy. British panellists 79% were less supportive. While the public sector was in consensus in this regard, the operational sector (69%) was significantly less convinced.

Panellists from both countries expressed concern as to the effectiveness of public sector plans and pointed out that this criterion was contingent both upon there being a marketing strategy in place and on such a plan being sensible, achievable and equitable. These findings are congruent with those pertaining to the role of public sector marketing support discussed in Chapter Five. On the one hand consultants from both countries emphasised that while marketing was vital to the success of tourism projects, the latter must be of appropriate quality. On the other hand it was also argued that even relatively inferior products could succeed with good marketing.

Zallocco (1994) points out that marketing plans are essential for small tourism operators since routine occupation with operational issues tends to overtake operators' focus on the type of market they are attracting or the innovations brought about by their competitors. Cooper et al (1998) argue that market planning is any tourism operator's most important activity yet evidence from a study of small tourism operators in New Zealand (Page et al, 1999) showed that only 11% of those surveyed had formal marketing plans. Likewise in Britain only 14% of small tourism and hospitality firms surveyed had formal written marketing plans and only 6% planned further than one year ahead (Thomas et al, 1998). There is no comparable research in South Africa through which to make comparison.

Criterion of Marketing Networks

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Projects should develop marketing networks, partnerships and linkages with other regional ventures.	3.25	3	88%	0.66	45	3.52	4	96%	2.96	3	79%

Table 7.21 Criterion of Marketing Networks

SR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

To South African panellists (96%) marketing networks, linkages and partnerships with other regional ventures were substantially more important than to their British counterparts (79%). However, South African respondents intimated that there is a limit to how much co-operation can be expected from other operators and that

establishing networks was an uphill battle. Ideally operators of different projects within a destination should co-operate but in practice this did not happen. Rather than working together in competing with other destinations operators felt they were competing with each other. The accusation was levied that operators do not see the contribution to the area, the addition to the diversity of product or the resultant potential for longer stays made by other projects. This made it particularly difficult to get accreditation and be accepted into existing structures as a new roleplayer. Networking, knowing who to network with and creating linkages was thus considered essential. A South African operator expressed it in these words:

If you want to leverage the project you've got to link it. Whether it be to the guy who's bringing through the tourists, whether it be a further on project that links with your project, whether it be the agents who book this. There would be a need for the outer plant to be interested in this project. If you didn't originally plan how you were going to create those linkages you're stuffed before you started.

These comments are analogous with Caalders' (2000:193) argument that:

The fact that the rural tourism sector consists mainly of small firms makes co-operation in the field of marketing and promotion all the more important. The offering of holiday packages or the co-operation of several small entrepreneurs can help to approach markets that cannot be served by individual firms.

Roberts and Hall (2001) point out that the value of networks also lies in their ability to facilitate the flow of tourists between projects. Greffe (1994) similarly argues that an increase in the diversity of rural tourism activities has led to a demand for supply networks through which tourists can move between different types of accommodation and activities. Since individual rural tourism projects are seldom able to offer the multiplicity of product required as a major attraction, it would seem vital that rural tourism projects recognise their interdependence and strive to build a healthy form of coepetition. The value of networks are well recognised in the literature and there is agreement that joint marketing ventures and networks are of great value to small rural tourism operators (Komppula, 2000; Lassila, 2000; Page and Getz, 1997). Marketing strategies and campaigns are, however, of little value unless their objectives are achieved and outcomes measured.

Criterion of Marketing Efficacy

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Evaluation of the degree of quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of marketing strategies and tactics should be undertaken.	3.38	4	90%	0.66	47	3.43	4	89%	3.33	3	92%

Table 7.22 Criterion of Marketing Efficacy

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ= Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Panellists (90%) overall were in agreement that the efficacy of marketing strategies and tactics should be measured. It was thus recognised that preparing and executing such strategies was of little use unless their objectives were achieved.

Within the theme of marketing criteria, respondents overall perceived sound market planning and research as vital to the financial success of any project. Problematically, as intimated in Chapter Five, respondents show little confidence in current public sector marketing support. Roberts and Hall (2001) contend that understanding the market is pivotal to the success of rural tourism ventures. It is, however, acknowledged that expertise in both market planning and research is deficient amongst rural tourism operators (Page and Getz, 1997). Evidence of the rural tourism sector's general neglect of planning echoes the assertion by Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) that marketing functions undertaken in the rural tourism domain are neither well planned nor methodically implemented with many of the promotional activities embarked upon ineffective and undertaken on an ad hoc basis resulting in wastage of already scarce financial resources.

Principal Research Findings

The criteria presented and discussed in this chapter are those considered by respondents as inherent to the commercial success of individual rural tourism projects. Although recognition of the importance of these criteria was spread across both the Delphi panel and fieldwork respondents, South Africans were generally

more supportive. Overall academics afforded highest recognition to the criteria whilst the public sector and consultants were less supportive.

Respondents overall were cognizant of the importance of sound project planning, management and marketing. South African respondents emphasised that whilst attempting to achieve best practice might be idealistic, it was nonetheless an important goal to strive for and argued that while all the criteria would realistically not be achieved, these were to be desired and aimed for 'maybe' an operator concluded 'one should aim for a high percentage achievement'. Other respondents echoed this sentiment 'I have seen the detrimental effects of bad planning, no research and raising expectations with locals who wish to better their economic environment. All points made remain very important. They might be too idealistic, but that should be the goal' (South African public sector). British respondents voiced similar opinions 'Many of these points represent good business practice but it is often difficult to ensure that individual operators necessarily comply with best practice' (British consultant). 'Many of these points should be included even if they are not achieved – not all planned projects succeed as in the end one must convince the tourists to come' (British operator).

Roberts and Hall (2001: 196) assert that the success of individual rural tourism projects is fundamental to the realisation of a rural tourism sector that attains its goals as an agent of economic development. Successful projects are, however, dependent on good business practice (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997). The importance accorded to the criteria in this chapter further underpin the exigency, reported in Chapter Five, for the availability of business, management and marketing training for rural tourism operators. However, judging from respondent comments and other research findings (Thomas et al, 1998) it appears that persuading rural tourism operators to take advantage of training opportunities is a difficult task and may require further investigation.

Concluding Points

Chapter six established a suggested index of criteria against which to evaluate the macro impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment. Criteria included in Chapter Seven pertained to the commercial success of rural tourism projects at the

individual level. Evidence from the findings of the research highlights the importance of project operators adopting sound business practices in ensuring the success of their projects. In order to achieve this rural tourism operators must have a good understanding of both the exogenous and endogenous environments in which projects operate and their positioning within that environment.

The interdependency between projects and the host environment is two-dimensional. While the flow of benefits to the wider community is dependent upon the financial success of individual projects, good business practice also entails respect for both the natural and human resources on which projects are based. Degradation of these resources will in turn impact on projects' financial success. While the survival of rural tourism projects is thus dependent on financial and operational planning, management and control and the ability to identify and access sought-after markets, respondents recognise that maintaining the balance between business, people and the environment cannot be ignored.

Chapters Six and Seven have together presented and discussed the criteria developed and rated by respondents as important for inclusion in a suggested index of criteria (Appendix 16) for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Inclusion of the perspectives and attitudes of a diversity of rural tourism stakeholders in formulating the proposed index of criteria was made possible by the research approach adopted. Chapter Eight presents the findings of the research in relation to the utilisation of the criteria and the implementation of evaluation in rural tourism projects.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPLEMENTING RURAL TOURISM PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

The application of evaluation in rural tourism projects was highlighted as a source of concern to Delphi survey panellists. Opinion as to its implementation was divided with some respondents in favour of the concept and others relatively fiercely opposed to it. Contextual issues raised by panellists, such as differences in scale, scope, location and ownership of projects, highlighted the complexities. Analysis of panellist comments led to the realisation that development of an index of criteria would be of little value without consideration of its implementation. Two questions asked of respondents in the focus group and semi-structured interviews thus sought to establish how the respondent perceived that the evaluation of rural tourism projects should be implemented and where responsibility for such evaluation should lie (Appendix 7).

Results pertaining to the implementation of rural tourism evaluation stem from analysis of the Delphi survey (Appendix 14) and Delphi panellist comments supported by the findings of a focus group, held in South Africa in October 2002 and seventeen semi-structured interviews, conducted in South Africa and Britain between October 2002 and April 2003. Findings in relation to responsibility for the management of the evaluation process are derived from the focus group and semi-structured interviews. Findings pertaining to participation in the evaluation of rural tourism projects originate from the ratings of statements in the Delphi Survey (Appendix 15) supported by comments from Delphi panellists. Presentation of the results in this chapter has been divided into three themes. The first comprises the findings of the research with regard to implementation of the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The second pertains to the responsibility for the management of such evaluation while the third theme relates to stakeholder participation in the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Implementing Rural Tourism Project Evaluation

Three statements pertaining to the potential use of evaluation findings were included in panellist submissions to the scoping round of the Delphi Survey and included in subsequent Delphi questionnaires.

Criteria of Use

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Similar, successful rural tourism projects should where possible be used for comparative purposes.	3.22	3	88%	0.64	45	3.36	3	93%	3.04	3	83%
Lessons learned from project evaluation should be transferred to other rural tourism projects.	3.25	3	88%	0.72	44	3.45	4	96%	3.00	3	78%
Results of rural tourism project evaluation should be fed back into the planning/policy process.	3.25	4	81%	0.76	42	3.36	4	82%	3.13	3	79%

Table 8.1 Criteria of Use

SA/BR = Combined South Africa/Britain SA= South African BR= British
Mean = Arithmetic Mean M = Mode % = Percentage of the panel who rated the statement 3 or 4
SD = Standard Deviation FQ = Frequency with which the panel rated the criteria 3 or 4

Eighty-eight percent of the overall Delphi panel was in agreement that, where possible, similar, successful projects should be used for comparative purposes. Consultants (93%) and the operational sector (92%) perceived this as particularly important. The panel were equally (88%) in agreement that lessons learned from project evaluation should be transferred to other rural tourism projects. South Africans (96%) were however significantly more supportive than their British counterparts (78%). Consultants were unanimous in their support of this criterion. Eighty-one percent of the panel recognised the relevance of evaluation results being fed back into the tourism policy and planning process. Academics (92%), the operational sector (85%) and consultants (80%) were in support of this criterion. The public sector (69%), to which it should have been of most consequence, was not. Although this criterion did not receive the requisite 87% level of support for inclusion in the index, it was considered particularly important that public sector negation of its significance should be documented. Delphi panellists, especially

academics, suggested that the results of post-implementation evaluation of publicly funded projects, most especially those that had failed should, within limits of commercial sensitivity, be disseminated. Panellists also suggested that the results of rural tourism project evaluation should be fed back to operators.

The substantially higher South African support for the transfer of lessons learned from evaluation to other projects corresponds with an earlier finding in which 96% of South Africans were in favour of networks and linkages as opposed to their British counterparts (79%). These findings raise the question of whether South Africans are either less competitive than their British counterparts or whether because rural tourism is, comparatively speaking, still in its infancy in South Africa, people are more willing to share information and advice. South African support for evaluation was well encapsulated in the statement that 'all destinations should have effective and ongoing performance and monitoring systems otherwise nobody has any idea of how well or how badly we are doing' (Consultant panellist).

The lack of importance attached by the public sector to the issue of feedback of evaluation findings into the policy and planning process underscores the public sector lack of capacity identified in many areas of this research. As Curnan et al (1998) argue the policy environment in which projects operate may, in the long-term, be more important to their ultimate success and to the sustainability of the resources upon which they are built and consume, than either creativity or innovation. It is asserted that evaluation should be adopted as an integral part of tourism policy and planning and that its value lies in providing both knowledge and practical information, most particularly that related to deviations in policy or plan implementation and changes in objectives (Elliott, 1997; Hall, 2000). Such information facilitates informed decision-making in important spheres such as the allocation of resources or the adaptation of policies or actions in line with changing circumstance (Hall, 2000).

It is not only the evaluation of tourism public policy and plans that is advocated in the literature. Nelson (1993:16) argues that it is important to introduce monitoring and evaluation 'at the firm as well as the local government or community level'. Delphi panellists professed that pre-implementation evaluation should be undertaken to help inform decisions about individual projects and should include evidence of the

way a project would benefit the local economy and local people. Panellists also intimated that the evaluation of social impacts was problematic and that consideration of sociocultural factors should be built into projects from the outset. However, whilst focus group members agreed that the potential social impacts of a project should be evaluated prior to its implementation this 'would be based on guesswork'. In agreeing with Nelson that evaluation should be implemented at the individual business level, this study argues that the aggregation of information generated by such evaluations will be invaluable in providing the local tourism planning and policy authority with an in-depth overview of the state of rural tourism in the area. Knowledge generated will facilitate informed decision-making and the adaptation necessary to policy and plans with a view to proactively ameliorating the negative impacts identified and widening opportunity to capitalise on benefits.

The Context of Rural Tourism Project Evaluation

The complexities of scope, scale and location are recognised by this study. Panellists highlighted that the stage of development of both a project and the rural area in which it is located will influence the context in which evaluation will be undertaken. In particular consultants pointed out: 1) that there would be differences between evaluation conducted in the pre-implementation and operational phases of projects; 2) that the degree of development of the area in which projects were located would influence the criteria against which projects would be evaluated; and 3) that criteria would differ not only between first and third world environments but also between developed and less-developed areas within such environments. It was suggested that projects should be locationally divided into three categories: 1) projects located in areas with no previous tourism development where an inclusive and comprehensive framework of criteria was required; 2) projects located in areas in the early stages of tourism development (see Butler, 1980) in which a selected framework of criteria was required; and 3) projects located in areas with increasing tourism development, which also required a selected framework of criteria. Based on this premise the rural tourism project to be evaluated may be situated on a stage-based continuum from pre-start-up to post closedown. Similarly the location of the project may range on a continuum from what Page and Getz (1997) describe as a totally undeveloped/wilderness area to a well established/near urban rural tourism area. Pearce (1989:69) describes these areas as 'developed, developing or undeveloped'.

See Figure 8.1 for a conceptualisation of the context of rural tourism project evaluation.

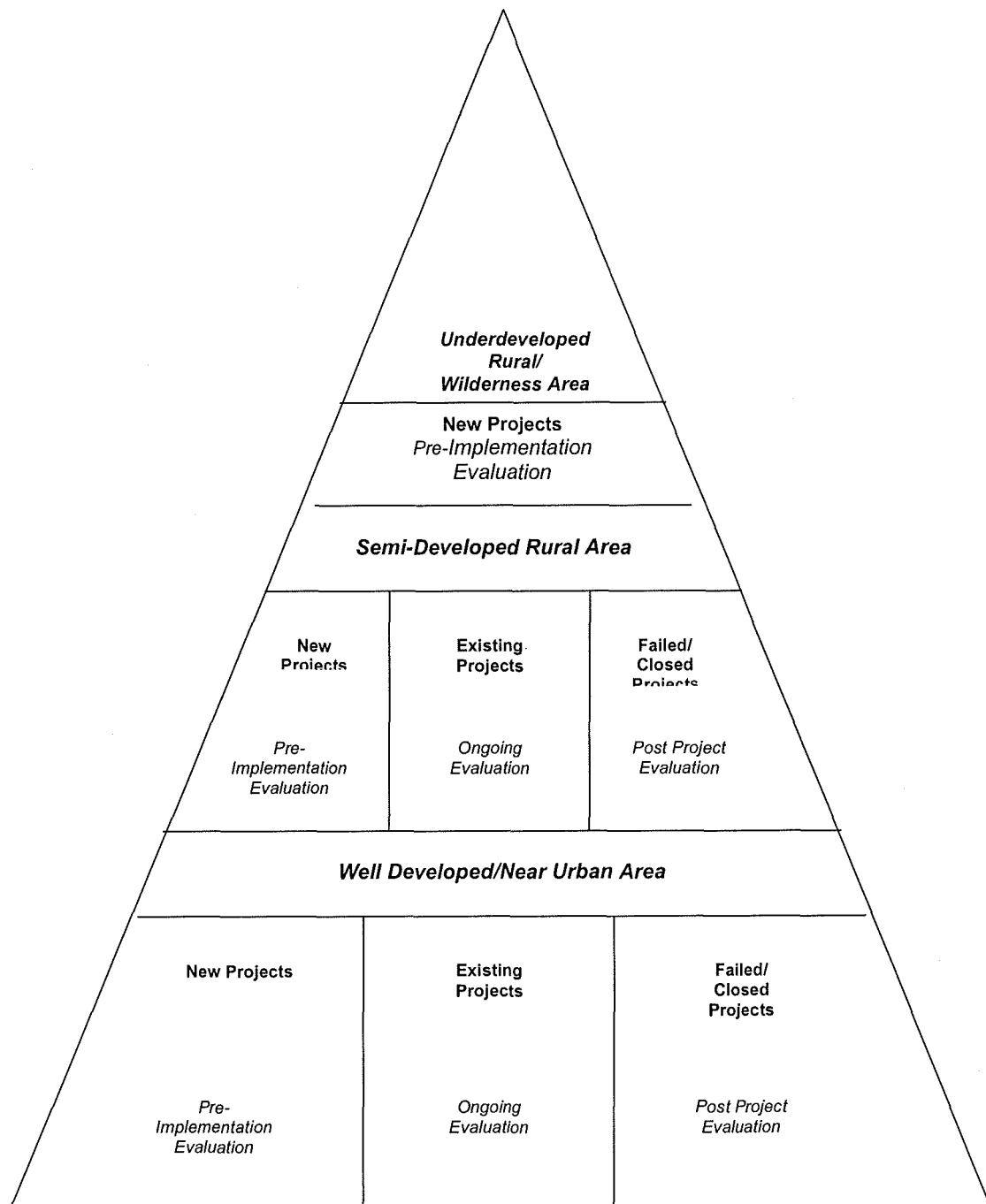


Figure 8.1

Conceptualization of the Context of Rural Tourism Project Evaluation As Identified by Respondents

Delphi panellists, in particular consultants, also emphasised that projects vary in scope, scale and type and that each rural tourism project is unique, posing a challenge for comparison across areas or regions. The choice of criteria for evaluation of a particular project would thus depend on local circumstances, the nature of the project, its objectives and its likely impact on the local economy and community. Whilst there were some generic issues that cut across all projects, evaluation would have to be tailored to the needs and requirements of the specific initiative. 'Post-implementation will certainly be non-generic and will be dictated by the nature of the project, the rate of development and the rogue factors that emerge during the course of implementation' (British consultant). Suppliers of rural tourism are equally diverse. The sector is an amalgam of independent developers, the public and voluntary sectors and partnerships between these sectors and communities all of whom are significant suppliers of goods and services. Figure 8.2 conceptualises the range of rural tourism suppliers.

RURAL TOURISM SUPPLIERS IN A LOCAL/REGIONAL AREA							
Voluntary Sector	Public Sector Sole Developer	Public/Private Sector Partnership	Public/ Sector Community Partnership	Public/Private/ Community Partnership	Private Sector Sole Developer	Private Sector/ Community Partnership	Community Sole Developer

Figure 8.2 Conceptualisation of Rural Tourism Suppliers

As discussed in Chapter One, defining the size and scope of a rural tourism project is difficult given the lack of a universally accepted definition of rural tourism and the fact that projects are heterogeneous rather than homogenous. On one hand rural tourism ventures are said to be small-scale and rural in character (Lane, 1994a). On the other hand many large-scale resort type complexes and leisure developments are located in rural areas (Butler et al, 1998; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The European Community uses the term rural tourism to encompass all tourism activity in a rural area (Keane et al, 1992). There are respondents who add to the complexities arguing that rural tourism projects should be divorced from the small-scale dictum that has held sway over the last ten years and that the primary concern

should be whether it is the sort of project that optimises regional development. 'Something acting as a mega attraction, as a magnet to bring tourists in that would then use other rural tourism facilities. It's all part of the process of trying to get over the dichotomy between rural and other forms of tourism' (British academic). A South African consultant phrased his argument this way 'rural tourism should maximise the benefits that the attraction can deliver within the context of what is acceptable to the host community. There is no one size fits all formula. The scale should be determined by the opportunity and the aspirations/acceptance of the host community'.

It is an underlying principle of utilization-focused evaluation that it is tailored to the specific context in which it takes place. Like the respondents to this research Patton, the doyenne of utilisation-focused evaluation, argues that it is imperative that the evaluation is 'matched' to the particular situation (Patton, 1999:40). He emphasises that in utilisation-focused evaluation the evaluator must work with those who will use the information generated to ensure that the evaluation is tailored to the context of the evaluand and the concerns of the potential users:

Every evaluation situation is unique. A successful evaluation (one that is useful, practical, ethical and accurate) emerges from the special characteristics and conditions of a particular situation – a mixture of people, politics, history, context, resources, constraints, values, needs, interests and chance (Patton, 1997:126).

Deciding on which criteria should be used in individual project evaluation must thus be determined in a consultative process between the various project stakeholders and the potential users of the evaluation findings (Patton, 1997). House and Howe (1999) agree that selecting suitable criteria and prioritising those which are most important is an integral part of the evaluation process. Stakeholders must also decide which criteria, selected from the index of criteria (Appendix 16) developed by respondents in this study for use in the evaluation of rural tourism projects, should be obligatory. As indicated in Chapter One, this index is not presumed to be either definitive or prescriptive but to serve as a guideline to rural tourism stakeholders.

Pre-implementation evaluation is the most common form of evaluation undertaken in rural tourism projects. The greatest proportion of the evaluation, however, pertains to

financial assessment in support of applications for external or public sector investment or funding. A British interviewee explained the public sector involvement this way 'we ring fence money that project sponsors can access from us as a county council. We establish a very complicated appraisal system'. Included in this system are guidelines and criteria that must be met such as the generation of employment, the attraction of extra visitors to the area, and the undertaking of environmental enhancements:

We have a monitor responsible for monitoring and reporting of projects. Basically it's a process of mostly telephone and meetings with a number of organisations, boards and groups involved in that monitoring process. You can't bend the rules in any way, the issue is always claw-back of the funds and that is the nightmare for everybody.

By contrast it was contended that once funds have been allocated public sector evaluation is not as rigorous as it ought to be and that whilst long-term monitoring of the economic, employment and social impacts should take place that very rarely happens. 'Somebody might do an economic impact appraisal to support the bid, but thereafter everybody who's given the money is onto the next project or the funding programme has ended so they're not bothered. There isn't that much ex-post evaluation going on' (British consultant). Consultants in both Britain and South Africa pointed out that environmental impact assessments were also not carried out on a regular basis. It was claimed that public sector funded projects did not have proper environmental impact assessments even 'when there is a law from their own department that requires them to do so' (South African consultant). 'Environmental impact monitoring tends to be reactive. If a problem arises somebody notices but I would like to see much more rigorous monitoring of some of these projects going on than actually happens' (British). This finding corresponds with the literature in which it is argued that environmental impact assessments should be undertaken on a recurring basis allowing for feedback and alternative plans or systems to be introduced rather than merely focusing upon mitigating negative impacts (Hunter, 1995; Simpson and Wall, 1999).

Despite the fact that most respondents tended to focus on the pre-implementation evaluation of projects, the importance of ongoing evaluation was also acknowledged:

Evaluation should take place when the project is conceived. It should be tested apropos its social and environmental impact. It didn't have to be high tech. It could flag out whether it needed an intensive one, if it was a particularly vulnerable community. Then when the business starts. Then six months into the project and a year into the project. Those are the critical ones. The other critical one is usually three years because that's your break-even point. Then say five years and ongoing, definitely ongoing, because any project has to continually re-invent itself, refresh itself, re-think and re-market itself so that it can keep on being something good (South African Operator).

Rubin (1995) is of the opinion that evaluation that encourages more informed decision-making and improved project design should take place at regular intervals throughout the project lifetime, thus clarifying its evolution and impacts. Long (1993) similarly expounds the need for preliminary evaluation during the project-planning phase, followed by evaluation and feedback during the operational phase. The concept of ongoing evaluation of rural tourism projects is however fraught with tension and evaluation awareness programmes will need to be introduced with a view to reconciling the pluralist ideologies of the diverse stakeholder groups. Scace (1993), focussing on the ecotourism sector, warns that many small tourism practitioners pursue their involvement in the sector primarily because of the independence and lack of restrictions it offers and cautions that too much enquiry would be perceived to erode this freedom. That this finding by Scace is likely to be universal is underpinned by Haywood (1993), who argues that evaluation of individual tourism enterprises is rendered problematic by the fact that operators' priorities centre on maximising tourist numbers and optimising profits and that evaluation might well be perceived as intrusive and irrelevant.

How Should The Evaluation of Rural Tourism Projects Be Implemented?

Respondents had diverse opinions with regard to how the evaluation of rural tourism projects should be implemented. Whilst some respondents had definitive ideas, others were uncertain and intimated that this was a new concept to them. Consultants, from both countries, expressed concern that evaluation could be over bureaucratic and a barrier to entry, especially in the case of small projects 'An over bureaucratic approach could kill off worthy projects before they get started. Some of

the statements, although seemingly innocuous or sensible, could be used to oppose worthwhile projects' (British consultant).

Comment from focus group members was positive. 'If there was a decent evaluation framework included in planning many projects would not fail'. It was envisaged that evaluation could play an invaluable role in providing guidelines for the public sector from planning for development and infrastructure to formulating tourism policy. Members of the group intimated that evaluation should be based on a system of incentivisation rather than regulation. Incentives could, for example, be offered to operators, whose projects met criteria such as use of local products, selling local goods (for example handicrafts) or including new projects in tours. The focus group members envisaged that such criteria would then be taken into consideration by developers in their project planning process.

South African interviewees generally favoured the 'carrot rather than the stick' approach proposed by the focus group. They claimed that legislative structures did not work and that people would find ways in which to circumvent regulation. Conversely, if incentives were offered, operators would comply in their own self-interest. A variety of incentives were suggested for projects meeting criteria. These could take the form of accreditation, increased exposure from tourism boards, and the provision of special public agency marketing opportunities for tour operators and projects that incorporated community benefits. Recognition could also be rewarded through awards programmes for complying with key criteria. Conversely projects that did not meet criteria could be prohibited from receiving public sector marketing support or from joining local or regional tourism associations. It was also suggested that incentives should be provided for operators to enter into partnerships with the community. Projects should make a framed commitment to meet criteria over a period of time and there should be clarity as to how milestones would be measured. Interviewees were thus able to generate a range of incentives that they felt would encourage project operators to meet criteria. The point was made that evaluation should be conducive to growth and added value rather than restrictive. British respondents also raised the idea of incentives suggesting that existing accreditation schemes could give projects that met criteria a stamp of external approval that could be used as a marketing tool.

Not all respondents were of the view that evaluation should be incentive based. Non-conformist interviewees of both countries opined that the requirement for rural tourism projects to be evaluated should be legislated. 'Evaluation should be obligatory. Evaluation of a project is good business practice. It is also good policy practice. You would have to have legislation' (South African operator). British respondents were generally more tentative. When asked how evaluation of rural tourism projects should be implemented a consultant replied 'this is very difficult. Evaluation issues are very new stuff'. British academics also recognized that the evaluation of rural tourism projects was a difficult concept. 'It seems to be a virtually impossible task trying to provide key principles or even trying to model this. I think rural tourism would be more successful if we knew what those answers were'. Academics generally agreed that criteria for project evaluation should be incorporated in the initial project proposal and business plan, in practice, however, this seldom happened. The point was made that a clear agenda of what the evaluation should achieve was imperative. Evaluation criteria, it was argued, should be measurable and should only cover areas in which information would be available to make quantifiable judgement. This, however, implies that many sociocultural criteria, which are extremely difficult to measure quantifiably, would be discarded.

Public sector interviewees confirmed that there was currently neither criteria for, nor evaluation of, self-funded projects. It was argued that there was a free market in tourism and that if project developers had funding there was little, other than a contravention of planning regulations, to stop projects going ahead. Whilst councils would like to have input to ensure that the region and its communities benefited from tourism it was perceived to be very difficult for councils with limited power to control project developers. 'In the wider public interest we want to encourage the right kind of rural tourism in the right place to get maximum benefit for visitors and the wider economy so that everybody wins' (British public sector). Whilst some respondents were unsure as to whether private sector enterprises needed to be evaluated, it was conceded that development agencies should 'be looking at what is actually going on in terms of rural tourism provision' (British academic).

South African respondents were generally more supportive of the concept of evaluation, referred to as 'groundbreaking stuff' (consultant), with the majority favouring evaluation of rural tourism projects by incentivisation rather than evaluation by regulation. British respondents were unsure and gave the impression that evaluation of rural tourism projects was, as phrased by the consultant, 'very new stuff'. Consultants expressed concern lest a bureaucratic approach to evaluation became a barrier to entry to new projects. Other interviewees perceived the benefits of evaluation as a learning process, enhancing understanding of what was happening in the rural tourism sector. A South African operator expressed it this way:

If we have evaluation at least we have a learning experience that we could apply again and again and make sure that the next time we got it better. It's a continuous thing and in that continuity you could get learning all the way through that you could apply to other projects or similar cases in different localities.

A change of attitude will nonetheless be needed if rural tourism stakeholders are to perceive evaluation as a learning tool rather than a judgmental or bureaucratic process. Building support for the concept of evaluation of rural tourism projects will require education of the benefits to be gained by operators and authorities alike. Kaplan (1999:4) avers that 'an evaluation is not a judgement, it's a tool with which to learn'. Kaplan (1989) further argues that the better the concept of evaluation is understood, the less threatening it will become and the more likely that its benefits as an effective strategy will be recognised. Patton (1999:24) similarly argues that the findings from an evaluation should assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a project and generating the understanding required for its improvement. Evaluation thus serves as an agent of capacity building amongst its participants and may provide valuable lessons that can be transferred to other projects (Patton, 1999).

The evaluation process suggested by this thesis is perceived to be multi-dimensional. Social, economic and environmental criteria are covered within the suggested index of criteria developed by respondents for utilization in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The index of suggested criteria, however, goes beyond this by including criteria that impact not only at a macro level on the host environment, but also at a micro level on the planning and management of rural tourism projects – factors that

are fundamental to their success or failure as business entities. The benefits of evaluation also have wider implications. On the one hand information generated from evaluating individual rural tourism projects will be important to the public sector in building a composite picture of what is happening at the local level and cumulatively at a regional and national level. This information can be used in informing the direction to be followed in tourism planning and in establishing minimum standards for accreditation or licensing purposes. On the other hand lessons learned at an individual project level will cumulatively strengthen the rural tourism business sector at all levels.

A situational approach in which a basic beginning is advocated has undoubted merit. The rural tourism sector is infinitely more likely to accept an evaluation process that is introduced slowly and in stages as opposed to one that is heavy-handedly imposed. It was also suggested that striking a balance between those criteria perceived as obligatory and those that were merely desirable was important. It is thus possible that those criteria considered 'obligatory' should be introduced in the short-term whilst conformance with the wider ranging 'desirable' criteria become medium to longer-term objectives. The adoption of this approach will require further work to determine which criteria are perceived as obligatory, as opposed to those that are desirable.

Who Should Be Responsible For The Evaluation Of Rural Tourism Projects?

The issue of where responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects should rest elicited a diverse range of responses. This issue was raised for the first time in the focus group and interviews and respondents, contending that this was difficult, needed to give it some thought. In the focus group it was proposed that there was a need for a partnership between government, the private sector and a prominent sector of the community who should be 'institutionally mandated to be the implementers of evaluation and the policeman of the criteria'. Although the word 'policeman' smacks of the bureaucratic approach feared by consultants, several South African interviewees favoured the committee type approach. 'The ideal model of evaluation would be an evaluation committee that was made up from local representatives as well as regional and central representatives of both business as well as government' (South African operator). 'It should be done as a joint venture between industry

associations and the tourism authorities at local and provincial level. To do it properly a special capacity should be created' (South African public sector).

Other South African interviewees argued that it was a local authority responsibility. 'Local councils are the only structures on the ground and able to regularly check compliance' (South African consultant). It was however pointed out that there was huge capacity to be built in local councils to do pre-implementation evaluation. Few of the government institutions and tourism structures were perceived to have the expertise to assess the tourism potential and impact of rural tourism projects. Whilst British interviewees also enunciated diverse opinions, the local authority was the most predominantly mentioned institution where it was perceived the responsibility for evaluation should rest. As in South Africa, the lack of capacity of local authorities to undertake the responsibility was expressed as a problem:

The public sector at local authority level. They are the only ones with the credibility to perform the task. Problem is that the local authority lacks expertise to collect, correlate and analyse the information. Lacks the expertise to create a methodology to undertake evaluation (British consultant).

British respondents were of the opinion that there was currently no single authority with the competence to accept this responsibility and that there would be different agencies evaluating different aspects. Although various authorities (for example Departments of Town and Country Planning, local authorities, environmental organisations, enterprise companies, tourist boards) were mentioned in relation to the evaluation of economic and environmental criteria no mention was made of social criteria. Respondents acknowledged that there did not appear to be any organisation with the necessary competency to undertake this function. To a query in this regard an academic answered 'who should do it? I would get the local authority to hire people like me because I don't think the expertise is there'. Respondents commonly recognised the role of the local authority, perceived as the most apposite institution by virtue of their perceived neutrality and representation of wider community interest, as the central agency. In both South Africa and Britain academic respondents, who perceived that individual agencies would not have the resources to undertake evaluation on their own, widely supported the possible role of universities.

South Africans argued that individual responsibility and accountability should be a strong factor in the overall process since it was perceived that, in the long run, a heavy top-down bureaucratic approach would not work. British respondents also highlighted the individual responsibility of the project operator. 'The responsibility would lie with the person setting up the business to make sure that there's recognition of the fact that there needs to be an evaluation of its impact both in economic and cultural/social terms'. This argument is congruent with the contention documented in Chapter Three that the capacity of stakeholders can be built, through the adoption of utilization-focused evaluation, to conduct their own evaluations with the responsible authority functioning as a facilitator.

Judging from the responses in both Britain and South Africa it becomes apparent that there is currently no authority with the capacity to assume the mantle of responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. An additional problem, highlighted in Chapter Five, is the lack of co-operation and co-ordination existing between authorities and organisations. A British academic endorsed this problem claiming that:

It's one of the problems we are finding here. We've put research projects forward for funding and they say "well we don't have anybody to properly evaluate this" and then they try and farm it out and it goes round and round in circles. Nobody feels that they are appropriate to undertake it but they don't want to come together to pool their resources and create some sort of synergy.

As the closest public sector authority at grassroots level it is logical that it should be the local authority, which assumes the ultimate responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Two important issues however also emerge from the previous discussion. Firstly in both countries academic respondents have recognised the role that universities can play as facilitators in this process. This is an endorsement of the findings in Chapter Five in which the potential value of these institutions in support of the industry has been identified. The second is the realisation that it is imperative that rural tourism project operators buy into and take ownership of the concept of evaluation. If evaluation is to fulfil its potential role in generating the information required to build knowledge, stakeholders will need to be convinced of its utility and value. The caveats sounded by Scace (1993) and Haywood (1993) that operators are

likely to perceive evaluation as an erosion of their freedom, intrusive and irrelevant was underpinned by a British consultant who emphasised that:

The trade is nervous of being asked for information about how their business is performing. They must be told why. What for. Must be assured of confidentiality. Must be convinced that the process will be used to produce valuable information for people in the trade.

This ties in with the concept iterated by South African respondents that evaluation must be both motivational and beneficial. Scace (1993) also refers to the fear with which operators regard what is perceived as too much scrutiny. Acceptance of evaluation by the rural tourism sector will entail education with regard to its merits. Lack of capacity and paucity of in-depth business and tourism knowledge have been identified as major constraints throughout the rural tourism sector (Mckercher and Robbins, 1998; Roberts and Hall, 2001). The value of evaluation as a learning process will have to be emphasised. The importance of the knowledge generated to inform decision-making, to create greater understanding of rural tourism amongst local authorities and ultimately to lead to more appropriate rural tourism policy and planning, must be accentuated. Although the public sector should assume leadership of the process, it is imperative that the evaluation undertaken should be both participatory and utilisation-focused. Patton (1997) argues that stakeholder participation, as propounded by utilisation-focused evaluation, builds a sense of ownership of the evaluation process amongst participants making them much more receptive to its findings. The final section of this chapter seeks to establish which stakeholders should be involved in the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

Who Should Be Involved In The Evaluation Of Rural Tourism Projects?

Delphi panellists rated the perceived importance of diverse stakeholders for inclusion in the process of evaluating rural tourism projects.

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%
Local Councils/Authorities	3.63	4	98%	0.53	50	3.71	4	100%	3.52	4	96%
Funding Agencies	3.59	4	96%	0.57	49	3.64	4	100%	3.52	4	91%
National Parks/Protected Areas within the region	3.50	4	94%	0.61	47	3.63	4	93%	3.35	3	96%
Regional/District Councils	3.48	4	90%	0.68	45	3.57	4	89%	3.36	3	91%
Local Tourism Organisations	3.40	4	88%	0.69	44	3.57	4	93%	3.20	3	82%
Regional/Provincial Tourism Boards	3.24	3	84%	0.72	42	3.36	4	86%	3.09	3	82%
Community Organisations/ Committees	3.31	4	82%	0.76	42	3.46	4	82%	3.13	3	83%
Heritage Management Organisations within the region	3.18	3	80%	0.74	41	3.36	4	82%	2.96	3	78%
Traditional Leaders	3.19	4	80%	0.79	40	3.41	4	85%	2.91	3	74%
Regional Tourism Organisations	3.25	4	80%	0.81	39	3.41	4	85%	3.07	4	73%
Tourism Industry Organisations (Tour Operator/ Hotelier etc)	2.96	3	72%	0.73	36	3.11	3	79%	2.77	3	64%
Political Leadership (Ward Councillors, Mayors, MP/ MECs)	3.03	3	71%	0.84	35	3.13	4	69%	2.91	3	74%
NGOs involved in the Local area	2.94	3	69%	0.90	35	3.07	4	75%	2.78	3	61%
Other local business organisations	2.76	3	62%	0.74	31	2.96	3	79%	2.50	2	41%

Table 8.2 Stakeholder Involvement In The Evaluation Of Rural Tourism Projects.

Amongst panellists of both countries majority recognition was for local authorities (98%). Funding agencies (96%), national park or other protected area authorities within the region (94%) and regional district councils (90%) also received firm support. Whilst academics, the public sector and consultants were in consensus with regard to regional/district council inclusion, the operational sector (77%) was far less supportive (Appendix 15). South Africans (93%) were more supportive of the inclusion of local tourism organisations as opposed to British panellists (82%). Their

inclusion was nonetheless perceived as important to both parties. Regional/Provincial tourism boards (84%); community organisations (82%) and heritage management organisations within the region (80%) were all also perceived as important stakeholders whose involvement was necessary. However, in the case of regional/provincial tourism boards, consultants (62%) and the operational sector (77%) were far less supportive than either academics (100%) or the public sector (92%). Community organisations, whilst highly rated by academics (92%) and the public sector (83%) received significantly less support from the operators (67%).

Whilst 85% of South Africans perceived the inclusion of traditional leaders as important, 74% of the British were of a similar opinion. This is however understandable given that traditional leadership is an important feature of South African society. Operators (62%) were however significantly less supportive of their inclusion. South Africans (85%) supported the inclusion of regional tourism organisations as opposed to 73% of British panellists. Whilst both the academic (92%) and public sector (92%) were in favour of Regional Tourism Organisations, the operational sector (77%) and consultants (62%) were less so. Support from South Africans (79%) for the inclusion of tourism industry organisations was also perceptibly higher than from British panellists (64%). Interestingly academics were unanimous in their belief that tourism industry organisations should be included. The public sector (75%), consultants (58%) and the operational sector (54%) were unconvinced.

The inclusion of political leadership did not receive wide support. Academics (75%) were most in favour of this stakeholder sector. Similarly academics (91%) supported the inclusion of NGOs involved in the local area. Other sectors, in particular the consultants (54%) did not. South African panellists (79%) and the operational sector (77%) were reasonably supportive of the inclusion of other local business organisations. British panellists (41%) and most especially consultants (38%) most decisively were not. Realisation of the value of networking and linkages perhaps influenced the operators rating in this regard. Academics recognised the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders as important. Consultants and the operational sector, however, discounted the inclusion of many suggested stakeholders including tourism industry organisations. Panellists additionally argued that stakeholder involvement

would depend on the nature, developer, scale and location of the project. Small projects might only require one, two or three stakeholders – large projects could benefit from all of them. While some panellists were of the opinion that all the stakeholders listed were important, at the other extreme a South African consultant argued ‘if we want to make sure that no projects get off the ground, then we must give it to all potential stakeholders – they will effectively kill it dead!’

Respondents considered it vital that participants should be those with tourism expertise rather than political agendas to further. ‘Those with a political reason for involvement, but limited knowledge of tourism issues, are of less importance and can get in the way. Key players should be those with particular and relevant expertise’ (British consultant). The political context was picked up in various ways. ‘It all depends on the socio-political context and prevailing power structure. It might be all very well that a local council is involved but they may also be intransigent opponents of democratic/participatory development’ (British academic). ‘There is a big gap between the provincial and local levels, which results in a different focus on certain projects and outcome is measured differently. Political effectiveness can often be quite unimportant to local organisations/ NGOs’ (South African public sector). The reason behind the lack of support for the inclusion of tourism industry organisations was edified in panellist comments ‘Sometimes industry members don’t want more products in their region and will stonewall competition’ (British operator). ‘Care should be taken to ensure that sub-sector interests are not over-influential. The accommodation sector is generally the most numerous and vociferous, but strangely has limited understanding of wider issues’ (British consultant).

The view that participants in an evaluation should only be those with expertise negates its importance as a capacity building exercise. Furthermore respondents have intimated that evaluation expertise in the rural tourism field is currently deficient in both South Africa and Britain. Respondents have also acknowledged that there is a lack of tourism expertise both within the public sector and amongst rural tourism operators in both countries. The necessary expertise must thus be built. What is important is the point made by panellists from both countries that the evaluation process should be simple, straightforward and understandable by consultants, operators and communities.

What is apparent, both from the ratings of the Delphi survey and from panellist comments, is that there is a diverse range of stakeholders who could or should be involved in the evaluation process. The complications inherent in the issue of stakeholder participation and how the interests of various stakeholders should be represented in an evaluation of rural tourism projects will, however, require significant debate. Patton (1997:42), who defines stakeholders as 'anyone who makes decisions or desires information about a programme,' agrees that the degree and nature of stakeholder participation will vary. He qualifies his definition by recognising the plurality and conflicting nature of stakeholder interests and accepts that no evaluation is able to accommodate every concern since focus is central to good evaluation. He thus advocates that the range of potential stakeholders be restricted to a 'group of primary intended users. Their information needs, that is, their intended uses, focus the evaluation' (Patton, 1997:42). In the view of this thesis the defining factor as to who should, or should not, participate in an evaluation would be thus be dependent on the focus of the evaluation. Selecting the correct stakeholders is imperative in ensuring that the evaluation process does not degenerate into a platform for airing grievances or making political points but maintains its focus on generating information useful to the project operator in improving his project and to the local authority in taking more informed decisions in relation to the management of the rural tourism sector.

Principal Research Findings

Support for the concept of rural tourism project evaluation varied amongst research respondents. Overall South African respondents appeared to be both more supportive and more at ease with the concept than their British counterparts. Whilst the majority of South African respondents were in favour of incentives being awarded to projects meeting evaluation criteria, British respondents expressed less certainty. The ongoing evaluation of rural tourism projects is an innovative concept. In practice there will need to be extensive debate with regard to its implementation. This study was thus not able to reach any conclusive findings in this regard; however, suggestions for further work are included in Chapter Nine.

Overall respondents view local authorities as the logical custodians of the responsibility for the management of the rural tourism evaluation process. What is of primary concern is building capacity at this level if local authorities are to assume their leadership role in proactively promoting the adoption of evaluation and the utilisation of its findings as an integral feature of the rural tourism development agenda. Identifying the legitimate stakeholders for participation in the evaluation process will require extensive deliberation and negotiation. The list of participants and the criteria selected for utilisation from the proposed index of criteria presented will perforce have to be tailor-made to the individual circumstances of the project, its stage of development and its location. In order for participation in the evaluation process to be meaningful, the process will also have to be conducted at a level that is easily comprehensible to its participants as opposed to the adoption of a 'high-tech' format.

Concluding Points

Based on the findings of the research there is evidence that as a new concept the ongoing evaluation of rural tourism projects will require substantial negotiation and consultation with regard to its implementation. Of significance will be the acceptance by local authorities of their responsibility in managing the evaluation process and in building their capacity to adequately fulfil this role. Acceptance of evaluation by the rural tourism sector will entail education with regard to its merits. This will require emphasis of its value as a learning process and its benefits to rural tourism stakeholders. This chapter has presented the findings of the research pertaining to the implementation of evaluation, the allocation of responsibility for management of the process and the stakeholders who should participate. The final chapter of this thesis presents the conclusions reached and makes recommendations for further research in the field of rural tourism project evaluation.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An Overview of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to formulate an evaluation framework for application in rural tourism projects. An exploratory orientation was adopted in which the potential of evaluation as a tool in the development and management of rural tourism projects and their impacts on their host environment were considered. Given the lack of universally accepted definitions, the complexities in conceptualising both 'rural' (Cloke, 1992; Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 1993) and 'rural tourism' (Dernoi, 1991; Lane, 1994a; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997) were discussed in Chapter One.

Chapter Two comprised a review of the literature pertaining to rural tourism. Initially the chapter examined the role of the public sector in the governance and management of rural tourism and acknowledged the challenges it faces in fulfilling its responsibilities in this regard (Jenkins et al, 1998). Secondly the chapter undertook an analysis of the macro impacts of rural tourism on the host environment. Consideration of local community development needs, the imperative of their involvement in decision-making and support for rural tourism as a development option were widely recognised (Butler, 1999; Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Timothy and Tosun, 2003). Caveats were sounded that rural tourism should not, however, be relied on as an economic panacea in rural areas but should form part of a wider economic diversification strategy (Butler and Clark, 1992; Gannon, 1994). It was argued that by adding to the diversity of economic activity in an area rural tourism had the potential to fulfil its promise as a provider of additional income, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for local people and as a support for other rural economic sectors (Long and Edgell, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Finally the quality of the natural environment and the dependence of rural tourism on the conservation of this resource as a primary attraction were acknowledged (Denman, 1992).

Thirdly, Chapter Two examined the factors impacting on the commercial viability of individual rural tourism projects at a micro level. Lack of previous tourism experience, deficient managerial and operational capacity, and a general weakness in marketing and finance, were found to militate against projects attaining their maximum economic potential (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; Getz and Carlsen, 2000; McKercher and Robbins, 1998). Throughout the literature the imperative of education and training, deficient at every level of the rural tourism sector, was highlighted (McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page and Getz, 1997). In recognising the importance of individual projects to the overall performance of the rural tourism sector (Roberts and Hall, 2001), and the factors pivotal both to their commercial success and impacts on the host environment, the literature review provided issues against which the index of criteria, developed by respondents for the evaluation of rural tourism projects, could be examined in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

After reviewing the diverse definitions of evaluation and the theoretical approaches expounded by its leading scholars (for example Fetterman, 1997a; Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Weiss, 1972b), Chapter Three suggested utilisation-focused evaluation as most appropriate to the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The recommendation was defended on the basis of utilization-focused evaluation's facility to make judgements, improve the evaluand's effectiveness, inform decisions about future evaluands and provide information for the specific use of specific users (Patton, 1997). All properties deemed to render utilization-focused evaluation a suitable agent of information and catalyst of improvement to the rural tourism sector.

Chapter Four discussed the research approach adopted in fulfilling the objectives of the study. The participation of a group of rural tourism experts in developing an index of proposed criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects was made possible by the use of the Delphi Technique. Respondents for this study were drawn from Britain and South Africa with a view to ascertaining whether there were substantial differences in the way respondents from a developed and those from a less-developed country perceived the rural tourism sector. In order to ensure a diversity of opinion, respondents were selected from the academic, public, consultant and operational sectors. Over three rounds the potential criteria were reiteratively fed

back to panellists (Moeller and Shafer, 1994), together with their comments from the previous round, to ascertain the importance with which each potential criterion was rated and the degree of consensus that could be achieved. The Delphi Technique provided a manageable method through which to allow participation by a diversity of rural tourism experts, spread over significant geographical distances, in developing the suggested index of criteria. It was, however, unable to facilitate the in-depth discussion and enriched text required in order to gain fuller understanding of significant and contentious issues. Primary issues, which evolved from the Delphi Survey, were further tested in a focus group held in South Africa and seventeen semi-structured interviews conducted in Britain and South African between October 2002 and April 2003. This afforded the opportunity for interaction and meaningful discussion relating to the evaluation of rural tourism projects, in particular its implementation.

The first objective of this study was to establish the role of the public sector in providing an environment conducive to the development of rural tourism. Findings in this regard were presented in Chapter Five. South Africans were substantially more supportive of statements pertaining to the public sector than British respondents thus demonstrating both the need for greater public sector support and higher levels of expectation in this regard. South Africa faces a gargantuan task in developing a rural tourism sector inclusive of its huge marginalized rural communities. It is only with substantial public sector leadership, encouragement and support that this can be achieved. Despite these differences many of the problems, concerns and frustrations that emerged both from the Delphi Survey and in subsequent fieldwork were similar. For example, there is evidence that it is particularly local authorities that must assume responsibility as leaders, strategists, coordinators and partners in building a flourishing rural tourism sector. However, in both countries respondents voiced disillusionment with the role played by the public sector and emphasised that lack of capacity and dearth of understanding of rural tourism, particularly at local authority level, rendered public sector officials ill-equipped to fulfil their responsibilities. Middleton and Hawkins (1998:105) have similarly recognised the constraints posed by the 'knowledge deficit' of the public sector at this level. The utility of evaluation in building the capacity of public sector tourism officials is a primary argument of this thesis.

A principal objective of the study was the development of a suggested index of criteria for utilization in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Chapter Six presented the criteria, developed by respondents, that pertained to the sociocultural, socioeconomic and environmental impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment and discussed these in relation to the literature review in Chapter Two. Consistent with the literature (for example Butler, 1999; Crouch, 1994; Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Ireland, 1999; Timothy and Tosun, 2003), principal findings included recognition of the importance of community involvement in rural tourism decision-making and the imperative that projects should be compatible with community development needs and respectful of local norms and culture. Findings also endorsed the importance of the extension of economic, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to the wider community (Bramwell, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). However, respondents also agreed that maximum beneficiation would only result if tourism was integrated into and cross-sectorally linked with other local economic activities (Long and Edgell, 1997; World Tourism Organisation, 1998). A key finding throughout the research is that in order for communities to participate meaningfully in tourism related decision-making, and capitalise on the opportunities generated, tourism awareness and training in a vast array of entrepreneurial and management skills is a necessity. This thesis suggests that evaluation can play a vital role in building stakeholder capacity (Patton, 1997) and in providing assistance and coaching as the tools through which to actualise self-empowerment (Fetterman, 2001).

Respondents emphasised that unless rural tourism projects were financially and business oriented, benefits flowing to the wider community would be constrained and local communities would bear the costs of rural tourism without reaping its benefits. Chapter Seven presented the criteria rated by respondents as necessary to the commercial success of individual rural tourism projects. Throughout this chapter the lack of operational capacity, in particular the deficit in financial, business and marketing acumen amongst rural tourism operators was recognised as a severe limitation to rural tourism projects achieving their optimal potential. This finding is congruent with the arguments expressed in the literature (Dolli and Pinfold, 1997; McKercher and Robbins, 1998; Page et al, 1999; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Whilst the

importance of individual projects to maximising the potential benefits of rural tourism are recognised (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001) their role in maintaining the balance between business and the host environment is equally crucial (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998).

It is suggested by this thesis that utilisation of the index of criteria, developed by respondents, will serve as a tool in generating the knowledge required by project operators in relation both to their management inadequacies and the external impacts of their projects. There is some evidence that South African respondents are already utilising the proposed criteria. For example, feedback from respondents includes the following comments: 'your questionnaire was so useful that I am going to use it for my own project evaluation. I will find it useful in the future' (consultant) and 'I will use your questionnaire for my own project evaluation – it has helped me channel and focus my thinking' (public sector).

The final objectives of the research pertained to the implementation of evaluation in rural tourism projects. It is clear from the evidence presented in Chapter Eight that persuading both the public sector and rural tourism operators of the benefits of evaluation will not be an easy task. In the first instance implementing evaluation in rural tourism projects is complicated by contextualities of scope, scale, location and ownership. This thesis, however, suggests that utilization-focused evaluation is able to meet the challenges posed. The central tenet of utilization-focused evaluation, focusing the evaluation on the information needs of the intended users of the findings, includes a flexibility of approach that is able to take cognisance of different contextualities (Patton, 1997). Utilization-focused evaluation recognises that every evaluation is unique. An integral element of the evaluation process thus entails reaching a mutual understanding amongst stakeholders of the purpose, benefits and design of the evaluation and an understanding of the data collected and the meanings of the findings (Patton, 1997).

Secondly, and consistent with the literature, respondents recognised that whilst tourism operators are suspicious of perceived bureaucracy and opposed to processes that threaten to curtail their freedom, operationalising the concept of evaluation in rural tourism projects will not be an easy task (Haywood, 1993; Scace, 1993).

Acceptance of evaluation by the rural tourism sector will thus entail education with regard to its benefits. Whilst the majority of respondents agreed that local authorities were the only perceivedly neutral structure on the ground able to assume the responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects, there was overall agreement that these structures lacked capacity to assume their responsibility as coordinators of the evaluation process. Throughout the research there was evidence that the public sector commonly did not recognise the significance of criteria relating to issues in which they should assume a leadership role. These findings are compatible with allegations in the literature that the public sector fails to comprehend its role in managing tourism in a manner that limits its negative impacts and optimises its potential benefits (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998; Pearce, 1992).

Finally, the task of identifying potential stakeholders for participation in the evaluation of rural tourism projects is challenging. Whilst the relevance of specific stakeholders will be dependent upon factors such as the type, scale and ownership structure of a project, selecting these stakeholders is likely to be a highly emotive process. There is also an inherent conflict of purpose in this selection. On the one hand there is a practical need to include stakeholders with the expertise and knowledge to participate constructively in the evaluation process. On the other there is the benefit of using the evaluation process as a tool in building the capacity of both public and private sector rural tourism stakeholders. What is clear is that significant further research is needed before the concept of evaluation in rural tourism projects can be pragmatically and usefully operationalised. The study was unable to reach definitive conclusions on which stakeholders should, or should not, be included in the evaluation process.

South Africans were generally more supportive of the concept of evaluation, and the proposed evaluation criteria, than their British counterparts. It was concluded that this is attributable to: 1) the recent emergence of South Africa as a serious player in global tourism; 2) the recognition that rural tourism is one of few options available to marginalised communities seeking socio-economic upliftment; 3) the realisation that unless all sectors of the population are included in South Africa's tourism industry there will be neither stability nor will the safety and security of tourists be assured; and 4) the dawning understanding that there will only be one chance to 'get it right'.

There is thus a burden of responsibility on both the public and private sectors in South Africa to develop a rural tourism industry that is commercially viable and able to extend benefits, such as job creation, skills transfer and entrepreneurial opportunity, to its wider communities.

Nonetheless, although British respondents were more cautious and articulated that this was both a new and difficult concept they were not antagonistic to the idea of evaluation. Ratings of the criteria in the Delphi Survey and comments in the interviews articulated many of the same problems and frustrations as their South African counterparts. This is an interesting finding and confirms a significant level of similarity between respondents from both countries in the criteria considered important in the evaluation of rural tourism projects. It would, however, be premature to generalise that these issues are universal to all developed and less-developed countries. This will require further testing.

Significant variations of support emerged between the diverse sectors participating in the Delphi Survey. Overall academics accorded the highest support to criteria across the board. While pronounced differences were registered in the criteria relating to the impacts of rural tourism projects on the host environment, differences in the criteria focussing on the commercial viability of rural tourism projects were less accentuated. It is recognised that the findings of this study are neither bias-free nor value-neutral. Responses are rooted in the views, values and knowledge constructed according to respondents own subjective reality, which is, to a significant extent, prescribed by the stakeholder sector from which they emanate. The differences of opinion arising between the respondent sectors throughout this research is indicative of the undoubted conflict that will arise in selecting the criteria to be applied in any specific project evaluation and the degree of consultation and negotiation that will necessarily precede the evaluation process. Patton (1999) acknowledges that evaluation is frequently subjected to different perspectives, values and bias and that a range of diverse skills and sensitivity in handling multiple stakeholders are essential elements of facilitation in utilization-focused evaluations.

Recommendations for Further Research

The subject of this thesis is complex and challenging. Before the concept of utilization-focused evaluation in rural tourism projects can be implemented substantial further research needs to be undertaken to test whether the findings of this study have wider application. It is a limitation of this study that it could not reach definitive conclusions on these issues. The following is considered important work that remains to be undertaken:

- 1) This study has been meticulously documented. It needs to be repeated in a range of countries to test the acceptability of the suggested index of criteria and the concept of evaluation in the rural tourism sector. Email correspondence with an academic in Portugal has confirmed interest in repeating the Delphi Survey in that country. A verbal discussion with an academic in the Czech Republic has confirmed similar interest. The research should not, however, be confined to Europe. Only when comparative analysis of various studies has been made can definitive conclusions be reached with regard to the adoption of a blanket approach to rural tourism project evaluation.
- 2) There is a need to test the findings of this research in case studies. In other words evaluation, using selected criteria from the suggested index of criteria and following a utilization-focused evaluation process, needs to be undertaken in a series of diverse rural tourism projects. Comparative findings will assist in compiling a composite picture of the problems experienced and the adjustments necessary to adapt the utilization-focused process into a practicable and user-friendly evaluation model for application in rural tourism projects.
- 3) There is a need for an easily comprehensible, pragmatic training guide for the institution entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the evaluation of rural tourism projects. The ease of comprehension of the evaluation process will be elemental both to its acceptance and the utilization of its findings.

- 4) The benefits of incentivisation as opposed to legislation and the possibilities of adopting a 'tiered' approach, in which some criteria are obligatory and others merely desirable, require further exploration.
- 5) A primary benefit of rural tourism is reputedly its ability to generate employment for women. It is also perceived that development of a rural tourism sector could act as an incentive to young people to remain in rural areas. Despite this, two criteria pertaining to the empowerment and involvement of women and the youth in rural tourism did not receive high levels of support from Delphi panellists and were thus not included in the index of criteria developed by respondents to this thesis. Further investigation indicated that not only male but also female panellists accorded these criteria low ratings. It is the contention of this thesis that further investigation into the role of women and the youth in rural tourism in warranted.

Reflections on the Study and Its Limitations

In adopting an exploratory approach this study has merely scratched the tip of the iceberg of a vast and complex topic. The Delphi Survey was found to be a useful instrument in soliciting information from a diverse range of tourism experts spread across vast geographic distances. Its lack of facility to discuss responses directly with panellists in order to gain a deeper understanding of the comments made or ratings allocated was nonetheless a limitation to its effectiveness. The subjectivity of the approach also means that conducting the Delphi Survey with different groups of expert panellists may produce different results.

The obsession with avoiding personal bias led to an overlong second round questionnaire. In view of this the level of response from panellists was surprising and gratifying. Tape recorder default raised concerns about data collection in South Africa. This led to additional work in establishing the ecological validity (Agar, 1980; Bernard, 1994) of the field-notes and their interpretations with respondents in order to enhance the credibility of the research findings. The focus group offered the

opportunity for constructive interaction, a facet that was appreciated by respondents. For example, an operator wrote that 'it was a stimulating day for all of us – living in such close proximity to rural development often one feels very alone and not sure whether one is heading in the right direction. This will be of very great assistance in the future and it was wonderful being part of the think-tank'.

The researcher cannot claim to have been an objective outsider to this research. She had been intimately involved in rural tourism in South Africa and not infrequently in conflict with tourism stakeholders from all sectors. For example, as chairperson of the Provincial Tourism Policy Committee she was accused by the public sector of furthering the interests of the tourism private sector. Conversely, the tourism private sector accused her of striving for political correctness as opposed to furthering the commercial tourism interests of operators. Responsibility for tourism development led to the accusation that too much emphasis was placed on development and too little on marketing. In turn responsibility for marketing led to accusation that this was receiving priority over development and the inclusion of previously marginalized communities. Every facet of the role thus held innate conflict as to where priorities should lie. Issues of race and gender aggravated the situation. However, this interaction led to an understanding of diverse viewpoints even if there was no agreement with them. For example, the researcher's own beliefs strongly supported inclusion of previously marginalized communities in rural tourism projects. But, exposure to political pressurising and the lack of capacity at community level to understand the basics of tourism also engendered an understanding of consultants and operators whose attitudes were less positive.

The lack of evaluation related tourism literature and the paucity of tourism research in South Africa was also a limitation in conducting the study. To reiterate, this study represents no more than the first step on a long journey before the evaluation of rural tourism projects can be effectively implemented. It is, however, argued that research in this field should be pursued. This argument is underpinned by respondents' comments. For example, 'thank you for including me – participating in this research has helped me to take a much closer look at development planning for tourism in a rural area' (South African public sector). 'Every study such as your own updates information, exposes current thinking and trends and adds to the debate and pool of

knowledge' (British consultant). 'I think the research you are doing is very helpful. It will be challenging to turn it into some practical and non-academic recommendations' (British consultant).

Contribution to Knowledge

Although the majority of the index of suggested criteria developed by this thesis are to be found in the existing literature, the researcher does not have knowledge of any other study in which respondents, located not only in two different countries but also more significantly in a developed and less-developed country, have developed criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. What is also of consequence is that despite the differences of opinion that manifested themselves between academic, public sector, consultant and operational sector panellists, South African and British respondents were able to reach a high level of consensus in the majority of the proposed criteria. Whilst there are numerous studies in which indicators of sustainability in various facets of tourism have been developed (for example Choi and Sirakaya, 2000; Miller, 2001) these commonly pertain to the impacts of tourism on the wider environment. It is unusual for issues pertaining to the commercial functionality of the tourism industry to be included. An exception is the index of tourism sustainability developed by Marsh (1993). There is, however, no indication of how what Marsh refers to as 'descriptors' on the index were derived. The index of criteria developed for this study pertains to both the macro impacts of rural tourism projects on their host environment, and those intrinsic to the business viability of individual projects at a micro level. Furthermore, this study also considers the operationalisation of evaluation utilising the criteria developed. In the tourism domain studies that consider evaluation at the individual project level are rare.

Despite its limitations this study has opened the debate on the utilisation of evaluation as a means of expanding the knowledge and capacity of rural tourism stakeholders. Although respondents were divided between support of the concept of evaluation of rural tourism projects and uncertainty regarding the complexities of its implementation, the high level of response to the Delphi Survey provided evidence that the research was topical and interesting. This, together with supportive comments from respondents, provides the justification for further research with a view to testing the index of criteria and the concept of utilization-focused evaluation

in selected case studies. Although definitive answers have not been found to some of the questions raised, it is nonetheless concluded that the study has achieved its objectives.

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APPENDIX 1

Dear Colleague,

17th October 2001

AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS: A DELPHI CONSULTATION STUDY

I am currently a PhD student at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. As part of my doctoral thesis I am embarking upon a research project with regard to the evaluation of rural tourism projects, the initial stage of which will be to undertake a four-stage Delphi consultation survey. The subject of my interrogation is the formulation of a framework for the assessment and evaluation of sustainable rural tourism projects, and I am hoping that you would be willing to contribute of your valued expertise to a consultative Delphi study in this regard.

As you are aware the importance of rural tourism is increasingly being espoused and prioritised by governments and non-governmental organisations, in both developed and underdeveloped countries, as a crucial factor in generating economic and social benefits of tourism in marginalised and peripheral areas which have little, or no, other potential for development. The literature, however, indicates that many rural tourism projects are embarked upon with little, or no, consideration either of future sustainability, or of the impacts of tourism or other essential factors to be considered in the development, implementation and management of such projects.

The aim of this Delphi study is to identify factors which are considered essential for consideration in the formulation of evaluation criteria for rural tourism projects and to further ascertain the relative perceived importance of issues thus identified in the development of the proposed framework. You have been selected as part of a sixty-strong sample to participate in this consultation process. Participants include high-ranking academics, government and non-governmental officials, project managers, consultants and developers/project operators. Your contribution will greatly enhance the chances of ensuring a resultant framework in which all pertinent issues are identified and addressed. This is by definition a controversial and provocative undertaking and I hope that you will find your participation an interesting and stimulating experience.

The four stages of the Delphi consultation process in which you are invited to participate will be as follows:

1. The aim of this first, or scoping, round is to identify factors, which should be incorporated within the study in the formulation of the framework. You, and other participants, are therefore asked to contribute a general list of twenty-

five factors, which you, in your opinion and from your particular expertise and perspective of rural tourism, deem crucial in the evaluation of such projects. Ideas may be expressed briefly and no attempt need be made to justify or evaluate the factors now proposed. This should not take up more than 30 minutes of your time.

2. Comments from the panel will be combined with factors identified in the wider literature search to create a more detailed checklist of criteria and issues to be considered. This list will then be utilised in the compilation of a questionnaire which will be redistributed to you and other participants at which stage you will be requested to rate the perceived importance of the various factors in relation to the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Again it is estimated that this should take you no more than 30 minutes.
3. The questionnaires will be analysed and returned to you. The redistributed questionnaires will be identical to the first, but will include the average response of the panel for each factor. You will be asked to reconsider whether you are satisfied with your initial rating or whether, in light of the average response of the group, you wish to make any amendments you now consider necessary. This second questionnaire will also present any new issues and opinions raised during the first round. Twenty minutes of your time should be sufficient to complete this phase.
4. The final responses will be used to identify the important factors for inclusion in the proposed evaluation framework for use in rural tourism projects and will be tested both in interviews and by application to various case studies

The success of this methodology is dependent upon your participation, and on that of other experts drawn from the fields of the environment, tourism policy, planning and operations, socio-cultural issues, economics and other related disciplines. I should therefore greatly appreciate your valued contribution in the creation of a tool, which may be usefully employed in ensuring the viability and sustainability of future rural tourism projects.

The anonymity of your responses is guaranteed. A copy of all results of this survey will be sent to you for your information.

With kind regards

Jenny Briedenhann
PhD Student Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

In the space below please note the factors, which you feel are imperative for inclusion in the evaluation of rural tourism development projects.

Please return to me by email or fax by:

.....

Jenny Briedenhann email addresses : jbried01@bcuc.ac.uk or
Jennyinuk@hotmail.com Facsimile :01494 465 432

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APPENDIX 2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE SECOND ROUND OF THE DELPHI CONSULTATION SURVEY PERTAINING TO THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS.

Enclosed with these instructions is a set of questionnaires, comprising nine clusters, made up of individual factors identified from input, received from you, during the scoping round of the Delphi Consultation process.

The aim of this, the second round of the consultation, is to seek input from you, sixty experts drawn from tourism related fields in the United Kingdom and South Africa, as to the rating assigned to each of the factors mentioned, relative to your opinion of the importance of their inclusion as criteria in the proposed framework for the evaluation of rural tourism projects. Whilst some factors might be considered essential for inclusion, others might be construed as being of minor importance, or perhaps of no relevance at all.

You are now requested to rate the importance of each factor, on a scale of 0 - 4, as potential criteria for inclusion in the proposed evaluation framework. Please indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate number on the scale, which follows each statement. The way in which you rank the importance of the factors will have significant implications for the formulation of the proposed evaluation framework. Since it is important to obtain definitive opinion on these issues please use the 0 = no comment/uncertain scale as frugally as possible.

Example

How important is the inclusion of the following factor in establishing criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects

4= essential for inclusion

3 =important for inclusion

2= of minor importance for inclusion

1 = should not be included

0= uncertain or no comment

Potential for generating new, permanent jobs for local people	0	1	2	2	4
Adequate language and communication skills for dealing with tourists	0	1	2	3	4
Proportion of goods and services that can be supplied locally	0	1	2	3	4

At the end of each cluster, you will find blank lines, which may be used by you for the addition of any factors pertaining to that particular cluster, which, in your opinion, have been omitted. Similarly, if you are of the opinion that your input from the scoping round has not been correctly interpreted or included, you are requested to note this in the space provided.

Any comment or input made to this study is anonymous and your name will not be associated with any information you provide. In the top right hand corner of the questionnaire is a code, which serves to assist me in identifying who has returned the questionnaire.

Once all the questionnaires have been returned, and the results analysed, the third round of the consultation survey will be sent to you. This will enable you to view the average responses of the panel for each factor. You will, at this stage, be afforded the opportunity to reconsider your original rating should you wish to do so. The third stage will require minimal input from you.

In order to facilitate the timely completion of this consultation, please complete and return the questionnaire to me no later than 10th May 2002.

Thank you for contributing to this process. I hope that you will find it interesting.

Jenny Briedenhann.
PhD Student Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

APPENDIX 3

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE THIRD ROUND OF THE DELPHI CONSULTATION SURVEY PERTAINING TO THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS.

Enclosed with these instructions is a set of questionnaires, comprising individual factors each of which has been accorded a rating by you during the second round of the Delphi Consultation process.

This is the third and final round of the survey. In accordance with the Delphi process, once all your input has been received, and the results analysed, the final report of the consultation survey will be forwarded to you.

The aim of this, the third round of the consultation, is to afford you the opportunity to compare the rating assigned by you, indicated in column one (1) to each of the factors, with the average rating allocated by the group, indicated in column two (2). The standard deviation for each statement is indicated in column three (3). Should you wish, in view of the average rating allocated by the group, to change your initial rating, kindly indicate this in the space provided in column four (4).

General comments received from respondents, relevant to each cluster, are reproduced for your information at the end of the cluster. Comments specific to a particular statement follow immediately after the statement in bold print.

At the end of each cluster, you will find blank lines, which may be used by you for the addition of any comments, which you wish to add pertaining to that particular cluster. Should you seriously disagree with any of the group opinions as expressed by the average rating, or with any of the comments enunciated, kindly state this and your particular reason for the disagreement in the space provided on the summary sheet. Such issues with which you, individually, disagree or which, in your opinion, merit further discussion will be further discussed in interviews which will form part of the second phase of the research.

In order to facilitate your reply to this survey, I have provided a summary document with these instructions. Should you wish to summarise your input, rather than once again returning the entire questionnaire to me, kindly make use of this document. The choice as to whether you wish to respond in this manner, or by returning the complete questionnaire, is entirely up to you

Should you have no new input whatever to make into this round of the survey, and are in general agreement with the average group ratings, kindly indicate this on the attached summary document in the space provided, and return the document to me.

Example

How important is the inclusion of the following factor in establishing criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism development projects

4 = essential for inclusion

3 = important for inclusion

2 = of minor importance for inclusion

1 = should not be included

0 = uncertain or no comment

Column 1 = Rating assigned by you in Round 2 (Indicated in bold print).

Column 2 = Average rating of the group (Shaded).

Column 3 = Standard Deviation.

Column 4= New rating should you wish to change that previously allocated. If you do not wish to change your original rating leave this column blank.

PSA1	Potential for generating new, permanent jobs for local people	3	2	.23	2*
PSA2	Adequate language and communication skills for dealing with tourists	2	2	.4	#
PSA3	Proportion of goods and services that can be supplied locally		2	.7	3+

* You have indicated that you wish to change your initial rating by placing a new figure in this column

You have left this column blank indicating that you do not wish to change your original rating

+ You initially neglected to rate this statement but have now placed your rating in the relevant column

Any comment or input made to this study is anonymous and your name will not be associated with any information you provide. In the top right hand corner of the questionnaire is the code, which has been allocated to you throughout the survey and which serves to assist me in identifying who has returned the questionnaire.

The Delphi Survey is to be followed by a second phase of research comprising interviews. I would be grateful if you would afford me the opportunity of discussing this study with you further. Could you accordingly please indicate, in the space provided on the attached summary sheet, whether you would be willing to participate in this process.

In order to facilitate the timely completion of this consultation, please complete and return the questionnaire to me at jbried01@bcuc.ac.uk or on fax no 0944 (0)1494 465 432 by 10th August 2002.

Thank you for your invaluable contribution to this process, which I am fully aware has taken a substantial amount of your precious time. I hope that the final outcome of the research, which could not have been completed without your co-operation, will justify this.

Jenny Briedehann
PhD Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

Participant Code Number :

SUMMARY SHEET FOR INPUT TO THE THIRD ROUND OF THE DELPHI CONSULTATION SURVEY
--

I am willing to be interviewed as part of the research to be undertaken in the second phase of this project

☐

I do not wish to change any of the ratings assigned by me in Round Two (2) of the Delphi Survey.

☐

I wish to change the ratings assigned by me in Round Two (2) of the Delphi Survey as follows:

Example:

Code No of
Question

New Rating Assigned

PSA1	4*
ECB9	2#
VSA4	3+

* Indicates that you wish to change your original rating of the statement with Code No PSA1 to 4

Indicates that you wish to change your original rating of the statement with Code No ECB9 to 2

+ Indicates that you wish to change your original rating of the statement with Code No VSA4 to

Code No of Question	New Rating Assigned

APPENDIX 4

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17th December 2002.

Dear Colleague in Tourism

Herewith please find the final report of the Delphi Survey in which you so generously participated.

This report documents the results of the Delphi Survey undertaken during 2001 – 2002. The purpose of this survey was to determine those criteria deemed by a panel of experts to be of importance in the formulation of an evaluation framework germane to rural tourism projects. During the first round you, as respondents, submitted a list of factors that, based upon your particular expertise within the rural tourism field, you considered essential for inclusion as criteria in evaluating rural tourism projects. In total 60 respondents submitted a list of 1,721 potential criteria. The process of consolidating, clustering and coding these inputs commenced in January 2002, was manually conducted, and proved to be slow, laborious and reiterative. Every effort was made to maintain the integrity of respondent input – a factor, which led to the subsequent length of the 2nd round questionnaire.

The 2nd round of the Delphi Survey elicited an 87% response rate from the original 60 respondents. In addition to rating each potential criterion respondents also submitted valuable qualitative comment and critique. The purpose of the 3rd round Delphi Survey was to offer respondents the opportunity to re-evaluate the importance of each potential criterion, taking into account the qualitative comment and overall panel response. In total 373 changes were made to individual ratings during the 3rd round. This represented a 2.36% change in the entire number of ratings in the questionnaire. Although this indicated a very slight convergence of opinion from round two to round three, there was no significant movement in either the mean scores or standard deviation.

Since one of the aims of the research was to ascertain whether there were significant differences in the opinion of South African respondents as compared with their British counterparts and between respondents emanating from academia, the public sector, consultants or the operational sector, results for each of these variables have been independently calculated. Where there are differences in the modes of the various sectors, this has been indicated in the last column of the report. Although these differences have not yet been fully analysed, it is apparent that South African respondents tend to more frequently allocate a higher rating to the statements in the questionnaire than do their British counterparts. Some salient differences have also emerged between the ratings of the various sectors of expertise. As an example item PSA 5 'Rural tourism projects should comply with all land related policy and regulation e.g. zoning' is rated by the academic and public sectors as 4 (essential), by consultants as 3 (very important) and by the operational sector as 2 (of minor importance). Comments submitted by panellists have been synthesised and are included for your interest at the end of each cluster.

The second phase of the research, which is currently being conducted, aims by means of interviews to solicit further information and clarification of issues raised by the Delphi Survey. The results presented in this report are primarily for the interest of those respondents without whom this research would not have been possible. Your generous contribution of time and expertise is highly appreciated. I have during this process learnt much from your wise and practical comments and will strive to produce a final report, which may in the future be of use to you. If any of you would like to receive more in-depth results when the data has been fully analysed please let me know.

I should like to express my particular thanks to those of you, some of whom I have never even met, who have on an ongoing basis forwarded articles, papers and other snippets of information which you have felt might be of use to me. Your interest and support has been invaluable.

With grateful thanks and wishing you a blessed festive season.

Jenny Briedenhann.
PhD Research Student Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

APPENDIX 5

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the focus group meeting to be held at 0930 on the 01st October 2002 in the Discussion Room at the Mpumalanga Tourism Authority Offices, Halls Gateway, Nelspruit. This focus group meeting functions as the first step in the 2nd phase of research into the formulation of a framework for the evaluation of rural tourism projects.

What has been done so far?

The 1st phase of the research consisted of a three round Delphi Survey in which a panel of 60 rural tourism experts participated. Thirty panellists were from South Africa and thirty from Britain. The reason for the inclusion of participants from both countries was to assist in ascertaining whether there are evaluation criteria, which are generic to rural tourism projects in both developed and less-developed countries. The sample consisted of experts drawn from academia, the public sector, tourism consultants and the operational sector. The reason for this diversity was to ascertain what commonalities and divergence of opinion exist across the different sectors. The purpose of the various rounds of the Delphi Survey was as follows:

1. During the 'scoping round' of the survey participants were asked to contribute twenty-five factors, which in their opinion were essential for inclusion as potential criteria in the evaluation framework. A total of 1,721 potential criteria were analysed and sorted into nine clusters made up of 304 individual statements, which comprised the second round questionnaire.
2. The aim of the second round of the survey was to gain insight into the importance assigned to each of the potential criteria for inclusion in the proposed evaluation framework. Respondents rated each individual criterion

on a scale of 1-4. On receipt of responses from the second round, averages and the standard deviation for each criterion were calculated.

3. The third round of the consultation afforded respondents the opportunity to compare the rating assigned by them to each of the statements with the average rating allocated by the group and also indicated the standard deviation for each statement. Respondents were requested to indicate whether, in view of the average rating allocated by the group, they wished to change their initial rating. General comments received from respondents, relevant to each cluster, were reproduced for their information and reflection
4. On receipt of the completed third round questionnaires changes were captured and the average, standard deviation, mode and frequency distribution for each potential criterion calculated

The Delphi Survey has identified a list of potential evaluation criteria. The focus group is now set to deliberate the following issues with regard to the formulation of an evaluation framework for rural tourism projects:

1. What do you see as the public sector role in the development of rural tourism?
2. What in your opinion are the principal criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects?
3. Who should have the responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects?
4. How do you see the evaluation of rural tourism projects being implemented?

The issues that you are about to debate are of fundamental importance to the successful conclusion of this research. Please think about them carefully and come to the session prepared to engage in a lively debate. I look forward to meeting with you.

Jenny Briedenhann

PhD Student Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1. What do you see as the public sector role in the development of rural tourism?
2. What in your opinion are the principal criteria for the evaluation of rural tourism projects?
3. Who should have the responsibility for the evaluation of rural tourism projects?
4. How do you see the evaluation of rural tourism projects being implemented?

Question included in interviews as a result of discussion in the focus group:

5. Where could someone wanting to start a rural tourism project source the sort of information that they would need? (The necessary information)

For interviewees who specifically mention sustainable tourism or responsible tourism - ask for their definition of the term.

APPENDIX 7**RESPONDENT PROFILE****D = Delphi Survey Participant****DI= Delphi Survey Participant Also Interviewed****DF=Delphi Survey Participant Also Member of Focus Group****I =Interviewee****F =Focus Group Member**

RESPONDENT CODE	OCCUPATION
D001	NGO. Project Manager and Advisor to the Southern African Development Community (SADC)
DI002	NGO. Rural Tourism Project Manager Previously Rural Hotelier Experience in both Britain and South Africa
D003	Consultant Chairman Professional Tourism Body
D004	Private Sector Rural Tourism Project Operator
D005	Professor Tourism Management
D006	Consultant and Tourism Researcher Previous Board Member, National Tourism Board
D007	Tourism Director, Regional District Council
DI008	Tourism/Environmental Consultant Facilitator of numerous Tourism Policies and Plans
D009	Tourism Consultant
D010	Tourism/Organisational Consultant
D011	Tourism Project Coordinator, Funding Body
D012	Environmental/Ecotourism Project Consultant
D013	Tourism Researcher, Funding Body
DF014	Director of Tourism, Provincial Government
DI015	Private Sector Rural/Cultural Tourism Project Operator
DI016	Professor of Tourism Management Special expertise in rural community-based tourism development
D017	Small Business Investment Consultant
DI018	Director, University Tourism Research Centre Author of <u>Zambian National Tourism Plan</u>
DI019	Rural Ecotourism Consultant Tourism Consultant to the Government of Mozambique
D020	Tourism Project Manager - Consultancy
D021	Tourism Project Director - Consultancy
D022	Project Manager, Funding Institution
D023	Private Sector Project Manager Community-Based Rural Tourism Project
D024	Professor of Tourism
D025	Chief Executive Officer, Provincial Tourism Board
D026	Private Sector Rural Tourism Route Co-ordinator
D027	Archaeologist Public Sector Rural Cultural Tourism Project Manager
D028	Regional Tourism Co-ordinator, District Council Project Leader Township Tourism Project
D029	Tourism Officer, Regional Authority
D030	Director Research and Development, Parks Board

DI031	Chief Executive Officer, Provincial Tourism Board
I032	Rural Hotelier
F033	Director of Marketing, Provincial Tourism Board
F034	Rural Hotelier Board Member Federated Hotel Association of SA Board Member Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Training Authority of South Africa
F035	Tourism and Environmental Training Consultant
F036	Private Sector Tour Operator Private Sector Rural Community Tourism Project
F037	Tourism Officer, Local Authority
D038	Tourism Professor and Head of Research
D039	NGO. Rural Tourism Project Manager
DI040	Professor of Tourism
D041	Academic. Head of Department Land Use and Rural Affairs
D042	Tourism Consultant to National Agency
D043	Tourism and Development Consultant
D044	Tourism and Development Consultant
D045	Tourism Development Officer, County Council
D046	Rural Tourism Researcher
D047	Tourism Officer, County Council
D048	Principal Lecturer, Tourism Management
D049	Development Consultant
DI050	Academic and Rural Tourism Author
D051	Tourism Professor Member of National Tourism Board
D052	Private Sector Project Operator
D053	Tourism Officer, County Council
D054	Tourism Consultant Specialist and Author on Farm Tourism
DI055	Consultant Rural, Community and Environmental Tourism.
D056	Consultant Strategic Management in Tourism
D057	Private Sector Tourism Company Manager
DI058	Professor of Tourism Head of Department of Tourism Management
D059	Research Fellow in Culture, Tourism and Development
D060	Tourism Manager, County Council
D061	Consultant Cultural and Ecotourism in both Britain and South Africa
DI062	Head of Research, Rural Public Sector Body
D063	Chief Executive, National Tourism Body
D064	Community Planning Officer, County Council
D065	Tourism Researcher and WTO Advisor
D066	Academic
I067	Head of Research, National Tourism Body
I068	University Professor Rural Tourism Specialist and Author
I069	Tourism Officer, County Council Experience in both Britain and South Africa

APPENDIX 8

RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY THE PUBLIC SECTOR

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Training establishments should seek to equip local people with the necessary capability to acquire available jobs and participate significantly in rural tourism projects.	3.37	3	96%	0.56	50	3.54	4	100%	3.17	3	92%	3.42	3	100%	3.31	3	92%	3.33	3	100%	3.38	4	92%
The track record of project developers/operators should be taken into account (e.g. previous involvement in tourism projects, the efficient use of project funding, support for local suppliers and services.	3.35	3	92%	0.62	48	3.43	3	96%	3.25	3	88%	3.17	3	83%	3.62	4	100%	3.14	3	93%	3.46	4	92%
In order to ensure success, rural tourism should be assisted by active, appropriate, positive public sector/ political support at all levels. Support could be training, financial, provision of land/buildings, reduction in service rates etc.	3.47	4	92%	0.70	47	3.68	4	100%	3.22	4	83%	3.42	4	83%	3.58	4	83%	3.53	4	100%	3.38	3	100%
Environmental education and protection programmes, which encourage environmental sensitivity and highlight the importance of environmentally sound practices and activities in tourism, should be implemented.	3.34	4	90%	0.72	46	3.38	4	89%	3.29	3	92%	3.58	4	100%	3.23	4	77%	3.20	3	87%	3.42	4	100%
There should be a viable implementation plan to establish appropriate institutional and tourism structures in the area, which provide guidance and advice to the industry with regard to development and a marketing structure/platform for the area on which projects can ride and work in partnership e.g. government agencies, trade consortiums, regional/local tourism organisations.	3.31	3	90%	0.65	44	3.52	4	96%	3.05	3	82%	3.50	4	100%	3.15	3	100%	3.15	3	71%	3.46	3	100%
Host communities should be realistic in their expectations of the contribution, benefits & disbenefits (economic and other) that tourism investment brings to the community.	3.44	4	87%	0.73	45	3.57	4	86%	3.29	3	88%	2.45	4	92%	3.38	4	92%	3.60	4	87%	3.31	4	77%
Training establishments should deliver a diverse range of appropriate capacity building, skills training and education programmes.	3.08	3	87%	0.59	45	3.18	3	96%	2.96	3	75%	3.00	3	83%	3.00	3	85%	3.13	3	87%	3.15	3	92%
Existing projects should not be duplicated unless indicated by sufficient stable or increasing demand. New attractions should be resisted in areas where there is already over capacity.	3.31	4	87%	0.70	45	3.36	4	86%	3.25	3	88%	3.33	3	92%	3.69	4	92%	3.07	3	79%	3.15	3	85%
Rural tourism project developers should be monitored to ensure that they deliver on their promises.	3.37	4	86%	0.72	44	3.50	4	89%	3.22	3	83%	3.67	4	92%	3.46	4	85%	3.20	3	87%	3.25	4	83%
The level and constancy of investment capital attracted (local/national/international) should be ascertained.	3.15	3	85%	0.67	39	3.33	4	89%	2.89	3	79%	3.10	3	100%	3.23	3	85%	3.08	3	83%	3.18	4	73%
A comprehensive destination analysis and product audit should be undertaken.	3.24	4	84%	0.81	43	3.5	4	89%	2.91	3	78%	3.27	4	82%	3.15	3	77%	3.14	3	86%	3.385	3	92%
Issues of land ownership, changes in local land use and the related impacts on the ability of the local population to achieve successful projects, should be taken into account.	3.20	3	84%	0.75	43	3.41	4	89%	2.96	3	79%	3.25	3	92%	3.31	4	85%	3.15	3	85%	3.08	3	77%
An appropriate structure should be established to facilitate the participation of host communities in an integrated tourism awareness programme which generates understanding of the tourism development process and the broader tourism industry.	3.33	4	83%	0.76	43	3.46	4	86%	3.17	3	79%	3.17	4	75%	3.46	4	92%	3.27	4	80%	3.46	4	85%
Mechanisms should be put in place to feed back information relating to market research and tourism trends to planners and policy makers.	3.27	4	83%	0.74	43	3.36	4	89%	3.17	4	75%	3.33	4	83%	3.15	4	77%	3.21	3	86%	3.38	4	85%

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Bureaucracy should be eliminated and fast, efficient information and administrative procedures relating to land tenure, permits and licences instigated to boost investor confidence and streamline authorizations for project implementation.	3.21	4	83%	0.91	43	3.57	4	93%	2.79	3	71%	3.08	4	83%	3.08	4	77%	3.40	4	93%	3.31	4	77%
The role of public/private partnerships in leveraging investments should be clarified.	3.06	3	83%	0.70	40	3.18	3	86%	2.90	3	80%	2.90	3	80%	3.15	3	85%	2.92	3	77%	3.25	3	92%
Local authorities should be responsible for the provision of the bulk infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage disposal, parking areas, roads etc) necessary for the development of rural tourism projects.	3.22	4	82%	0.92	42	3.29	4	82%	3.13	3	83%	3.36	4	91%	3.31	4	85%	2.87	3	67%	3.46	4	92%
The banking sector should view entrepreneurial tourism ventures positively enabling individual entrepreneurs to access start-up funding.	3.14	3	82%	0.86	41	3.21	4	86%	3.05	3	77%	2.91	3	73%	3.23	4	77%	2.86	3	79%	3.58	4	100%
Road signage and road signage policy should be sensibly managed, with both micro and macro level facilities and operators well signposted.	3.17	4	81%	0.88	42	3.57	4	93%	2.71	3	67%	2.75	3	75%	3.46	4	100%	3.00	3	71%	3.46	4	85%
There should be business mentoring support available to projects, and/or their ancillary entrepreneurial opportunities, if this is required.	3.12	3	79%	0.73	41	3.32	4	86%	2.88	3	71%	3.17	3	92%	3.15	4	77%	3.07	3	79%	3.08	4	69%
There should be good public sector marketing support to boost investor confidence.	3.02	3	78%	0.74	39	3.39	3	96%	2.55	3	55%	3.00	3	80%	2.92	3	69%	2.86	3	71%	3.31	3	92%
Rural tourism product owners, especially new operators and service providers, should be exposed to the broader tourism industry, thereby engendering an understanding of its operations.	3.27	4	77%	0.82	40	3.46	4	86%	3.04	4	67%	3.08	4	67%	3.46	4	85%	3.33	4	80%	3.23	4	77%
Government should make available a range of local/national government incentives for tourism development investors.	2.97	3	75%	0.85	38	3.20	3	85%	2.71	3	63%	2.92	4	67%	2.73	3	58%	3.13	3	87%	3.15	3	85%
To avoid the dangers of externalisation e.g. the emergence of ugly features in the locality which alienate projects and reduce their value, tourism developments should have buffer areas around them with restrictions placed on alien developments.	2.92	3	73%	0.84	37	3.26	4	85%	2.54	3	58%	2.92	3	83%	2.62	2	54%	2.85	3	77%	3.31	4	77%
The effect of tourism on affordable housing/ local housing demand (second homes, gentrification) should be established.	2.87	3	69%	0.84	36	2.61	3	54%	3.17	3	88%	3.25	3	92%	3.00	3	77%	2.43	2	43%	2.85	3	69%

SA/BR =Full Panel

SA= South Africans

BR- British

x- Arithmetic Mean

M- Mode

%- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4

SD- Standard Deviation

FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4.

APPENDIX 9

RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY SOCIOCULTURAL CRITERIA

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Projects should be ethical, with suitable negotiating frameworks and fair agreements entered into between developers/landowners and custodians/ local communities to facilitate project development.	3.57	4	96%	0.57	49	3.68	4	96%	3.43	3	96%	3.58	4	92%	3.54	4	92%	3.46	3	100%	3.69	4	100%
Project development and marketing should be managed in such a way as to generate an appropriate scale of visitation to the region thus avoiding negative environmental, social and economic impacts.	3.36	3	94%	0.59	48	3.32	3	93%	3.40	3	96%	3.42	4	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.14	3	93%	3.42	3	100%
There should be effective communication and liaison between stakeholder groups/local communities to ensure understanding of key messages and remove barriers.	3.35	3	94%	0.59	49	3.39	4	89%	3.29	3	100%	3.25	3	100%	3.54	4	100%	3.29	3	86%	3.31	3	92%
Stakeholders should have overall clarity and understanding of the aims, goals and rewards of projects and their intended impacts, without raising unrealistic expectations.	3.54	4	94%	0.73	49	3.71	4	96%	3.33	4	92%	3.67	4	100%	3.54	4	92%	3.43	4	93%	3.54	4	92%
Investors/developers should be aware that indigenous people attach strong cultural/spiritual values to land and should thus be consulted at an early stage when investment decisions could possibly involve land which is spiritually significant.	3.48	4	92%	0.70	48	3.54	4	96%	3.42	4	88%	3.67	4	100%	3.31	4	85%	3.64	4	100%	3.31	4	85%
Projects should contribute to host community confidence and pride in their culture.	3.37	3	92%	0.63	47	3.54	4	96%	3.17	3	87%	3.42	4	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.21	3	93%	3.42	4	92%
Projects should not impact negatively on the cultural integrity of the area eroding, corrupting or commodifying the local cultural resources and indigenous culture.	3.38	4	92%	0.69	48	3.50	4	93%	3.25	3	92%	3.33	4	92%	3.54	4	92%	3.21	3	93%	3.46	4	92%
Projects should impact positively on the indigenous host culture by demonstrating respect and support for human diversity.	3.31	3	92%	0.61	48	3.32	3	93%	3.29	3	92%	3.42	4	92%	3.46	3	100%	3.07	3	86%	3.31	3	92%
If projects will attract more visitors an assessment should be made of the type of activities undertaken and the resultant pressure on local resources and services.	3.23	3	92%	0.58	48	3.36	3	93%	3.08	3	92%	3.08	3	92%	3.54	4	100%	3.07	3	93%	3.23	3	85%
Projects should be based on authentic local characteristics and values and reflect/reinforce the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the area rather than promoting global homogeneity.	3.47	4	92%	0.65	47	3.45	4	93%	3.50	4	92%	3.50	4	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.36	3	93%	3.58	4	92%
Developers should be alert to the potential social impacts of projects and their level of acceptability/unacceptability to local people.	3.48	4	88%	0.70	46	3.61	4	89%	3.33	4	88%	3.67	4	100%	3.38	3	92%	3.57	4	86%	3.31	4	77%
Projects should be compatible with the resources and quality of the host location, engendering resident 'pride-in-place' and leading to improved maintenance of settlements.	3.31	4	88%	0.73	45	3.25	4	82%	3.39	3	96%	3.42	4	92%	3.38	4	92%	3.15	3	85%	3.31	4	85%
Rural tourism projects should not have a negative social/ environmental impact by virtue of outdoor recreational activities undertaken by tourists.	3.29	3	88%	0.72	46	3.36	3	93%	3.21	3	83%	3.17	3	92%	3.15	3	85%	3.21	3	86%	3.62	4	92%
Projects should be appropriate to the development needs of the community.	3.31	3	88%	0.68	45	3.14	3	82%	3.52	4	96%	3.58	4	100%	3.23	3	85%	2.93	3	71%	3.58	4	100%
Project developers should work with other organisations and the community in preserving and promoting local heritage, historical sites and architectural landmarks, where possible offering economic support.	3.27	3	87%	0.69	45	3.36	4	89%	3.17	3	83%	3.25	3	100%	3.31	4	77%	3.07	3	79%	3.46	4	92%
Interpretation should be provided of the attractions/ experiences around which projects are located.	3.35	4	85%	0.74	44	3.46	4	82%	3.21	3	88%	3.33	3	92%	3.31	4	77%	3.14	3	79%	3.62	4	92%
Projects should provide linkages to and promote local crafts and skills, offering encouragement, particularly to the young, to learn and revitalise local arts and crafts, producing items which are unique to the area.	3.21	3	85%	0.75	44	3.29	3	89%	3.13	3	79%	3.17	3	83%	3.23	4	77%	3.07	3	93%	3.38	4	85%

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
The development of rural tourism should stimulate a more diverse, vibrant society increasing the viability of isolated communities.	3.10	3	85%	0.69	44	3.04	3	79%	3.17	3	92%	3.17	3	92%	3.15	3	85%	2.79	3	64%	3.31	3	100%
There should be a transparent facilitation process amongst stakeholder groups/local communities in order to deal with power relationships between stakeholders and resolve issues of conflict.	3.15	3	82%	0.72	40	3.24	4	77%	3.04	3	87%	3.25	3	100%	3.15	3	85%	3.17	4	75%	3.04	4	67%
The level of projects potential contribution to the achievement of long term plans/ambitions for the host location should be considered.	3.10	3	81%	0.75	42	3.14	4	75%	3.04	3	88%	3.17	3	100%	3.38	4	85%	2.71	2	57%	3.15	3	85%
The impact on the local community if a project is not developed should be ascertained (socially/economically/environmentally).	3.06	3	80%	0.79	40	3.19	4	74%	2.91	3	87%	3.09	3	91%	3.38	4	85%	2.92	3	77%	2.85	3	69%
Cultural awareness programmes should be introduced for tourists in order to endorse their responsibility to observe and show respect for the norms, practices and values of the host community.	2.92	3	73%	0.80	37	3.21	3	89%	2.57	3	52%	2.91	3	73%	2.92	3	69%	2.79	3	77%	3.08	3	77%

SA/BR =Full Panel SA= South Africans BR- British x- Arithmetic Mean M- Mode %- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4 SD- Standard Deviation FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4.

APPENDIX 10

RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY SOCIOECONOMIC CRITERIA

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Projects should not lead to demands for new infrastructure which have unacceptable social, environmental or economic impacts on the area.	3.52	4	96%	0.58	50	3.61	4	93%	3.42	3	100%	3.58	4	100%	3.36	3	93%	3.62	4	100%	3.54	4	92%
Projects should complement, as opposed to conflicting with, existing programmes.	3.38	3	96%	0.63	50	3.50	4	96%	3.25	3	96%	3.25	3	100%	3.69	4	100%	3.36	3	100%	3.23	4	85%
Projects should contribute to local money flows and support economic linkages and local supply networks, creating stable local markets for local products, retaining tourism spend in the local area and adding to the sustainability of local shops and jobs.	3.41	4	94%	0.62	48	3.41	4	93%	3.42	3	96%	3.42	3	100%	3.69	4	92%	3.21	3	86%	3.35	3	100%
Projects should add value in meeting the basic needs of economic development and contribute, both directly and indirectly, to the economic growth of the area.	3.35	3	94%	0.59	48	3.32	3	93%	3.39	3	96%	3.64	4	100%	3.38	4	85%	3.07	3	93%	3.38	3	100%
Projects should be well integrated and work in partnership with other economic sectors in the wider locality, including more traditional rural economic provision and activities.	3.33	3	92%	0.62	48	3.36	3	96%	3.29	3	88%	3.50	4	100%	3.15	3	85%	3.14	3	86%	3.54	4	100%
Projects should be dynamic with opportunities to identify and develop new entrepreneurial opportunities.	3.47	4	92%	0.64	47	3.70	4	100%	3.21	3	83%	3.33	4	83%	3.38	4	92%	3.43	3	100%	3.73	4	92%
Tourist demand and consumption should not lead to indirect economic disbenefit resulting from overuse or increased pressure on local infrastructural systems.	3.23	3	90%	0.61	47	3.29	4	82%	3.17	3	100%	3.17	3	100%	3.07	3	86%	3.54	4	92%	3.15	3	85%
Projects should include the enhancement of the indigenous skills base, with emphasis on skills transfer at all levels.	3.38	4	90%	0.68	45	3.57	4	96%	3.17	3	83%	3.25	4	83%	3.46	4	79%	3.38	3	100%	3.42	4	92%
Projects should enhance the tourist experience and increase visitor satisfaction levels by providing an adequate mix of new high quality, interesting, educational experiences for visitors, thus gratifying their expectations.	3.49	4	88%	0.70	45	3.57	4	86%	3.40	4	91%	3.50	4	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.57	4	86%	3.42	4	83%
Projects should encourage self-reliance and community interest in genuine participation by means of employment, investment or growth, rather than quick money or empowerment tax (i.e. SWEAT equity- benefits linked to responsibilities).	3.37	4	88%	0.75	45	3.57	4	93%	3.13	3	83%	3.50	4	92%	3.38	4	92%	3.23	3	85%	3.38	4	85%
New rural tourism development projects should expand the product base of traditional (or where applicable new) tourist routes, enhancing their potential to attract and hold visitors in the area for extended periods.	3.13	3	88%	0.60	46	3.32	3	96%	2.92	3	79%	3.00	3	92%	3.23	3	92%	3.13	3	87%	3.15	3	85%
The ownership structure and beneficiaries of projects and their financial gains should be taken into account e.g. the nature and scale of stakeholder partnerships, joint venture participation, trusts, community, co-operative, state, private sector/ commercial or employee ownership.	3.35	4	88%	0.69	45	3.56	4	93%	3.13	3	83%	3.25	4	83%	3.46	3	100%	3.31	4	77%	3.38	4	92%
Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should generate and retain a range of diverse, quality, sustainable, direct and indirect employment opportunities for local people across a broad spectrum of talents and skills.	3.18	3	88%	0.62	45	3.11	3	85%	3.25	3	92%	3.50	4	100%	3.23	3	92%	2.77	3	69%	3.23	3	92%
Rural tourism projects should help to reverse rural decline and contribute to sustainable rural development in the local area.	3.35	4	87%	0.76	45	3.21	4	82%	3.50	4	92%	3.67	4	100%	3.46	4	85%	2.86	3	71%	3.46	4	92%
A strong relationship/working partnership between a project and other existing tourism enterprises and structures should be secured, enabling it to form an integral part of existing provision and activities in the wider locality.	3.19	3	87%	0.72	45	3.54	4	96%	2.79	3	75%	3.08	3	92%	3.31	4	85%	3.29	3	100%	3.08	4	69%
Projects should make a viable contribution to improvement in local wealth, income generation and per capita disposable income.	3.17	3	87%	0.65	45	3.07	3	82%	3.29	3	92%	3.50	4	100%	3.38	3	100%	2.79	3	71%	3.08	3	77%
Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should help to alleviate long-term unemployment.	3.15	3	87%	0.70	45	3.18	3	86%	3.13	3	88%	3.42	3	100%	3.31	3	92%	2.71	3	64%	3.23	3	92%
Projects should not lead to increased community dependence on external influences such as grants, an increase in economic vulnerability/instability, or the spread of risk through diversification.	3.26	4	86%	0.75	44	3.34	4	93%	3.17	3	79%	3.42	3	100%	3.23	4	77%	3.21	3	86%	3.19	4	83%

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Rural tourism projects should lead to community empowerment through participation in the construction, management, operational supply systems and contribution to the tourism product.	3.18	3	86%	0.83	43	3.39	4	93%	2.91	3	77%	3.25	3	100%	3.15	3	85%	3.08	4	77%	3.25	4	83%
Tourists visiting projects should through their demand for goods and services contribute to the generation of these commodities in the surrounding economy.	3.15	3	86%	0.72	42	3.25	4	88%	3.04	3	83%	3.09	3	100%	3.46	4	92%	2.77	3	62%	3.27	3	92%
Projects should be able to meet all the challenges of transformation, including resource transfers, as they develop.	3.19	3	85%	0.73	41	3.19	4	81%	3.18	3	91%	3.36	3	100%	3.08	4	69%	2.83	3	75%	3.50	4	100%
Rural tourism projects should encourage equity participation and fair, reasonable, equitable flow and distribution of benefits and costs to local communities.	3.15	3	83%	0.85	43	3.32	3	89%	2.96	3	75%	3.08	3	83%	3.15	3	92%	3.21	4	71%	3.15	3	85%
Projects should assist in developing/empowering local entrepreneurs for participation in ancillary business start-up and other local entrepreneurial activity.	3.06	3	81%	0.67	42	3.29	3	89%	2.79	3	71%	2.92	3	83%	3.00	2	62%	2.93	3	79%	3.38	3	100%
Projects should act as agents in helping to diversify the local economy.	2.96	3	79%	0.74	41	2.82	3	71%	3.13	3	88%	3.17	3	83%	3.00	3	85%	2.50	3	57%	3.23	3	92%

SA/BR =Full Panel

SA= South Africans

BR- British

x- Arithmetic Mean

M- Mode

%- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4

SD- Standard Deviation

FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4.

APPENDIX 11

RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA

POTENTIAL CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Projects should ensure that their use of water is efficient and that neither they, nor any of their activities, pollute water supplies or catchment areas.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	51	3.71	4	96%	3.71	4	100%	3.75	4	100%	3.54	4	92%	3.64	4	100%	3.92	4	100%
Project developers/operators should demonstrate an awareness of the potential environmental impacts of their projects through the formulation of acceptable environmental management plans and adaptive environmental management systems.	3.54	4	98%	0.64	50	3.71	4	100%	3.33	4	92%	3.58	4	92%	3.69	4	100%	3.50	4	100%	3.38	4	92%
Projects should not be either visually or audibly obtrusive to other developments or the surrounding area.	3.38	3	96%	0.57	50	3.46	4	96%	3.29	3	96%	3.25	3	92%	3.54	4	100%	3.43	3	100%	3.31	3	92%
Projects should fulfil EIA requirements and comply with environmental legislation in both the construction and operational phases of the development.	3.73	4	96%	0.53	49	3.86	4	100%	3.57	4	91%	3.50	4	92%	3.85	4	92%	3.79	4	100%	3.75	4	100%
An EIA/integrated environmental audit should be undertaken at the outset to identify appropriate tourism options and ascertain the compatibility of projects with the surrounding land use, environment and natural resources.	3.58	4	94%	0.61	49	3.71	4	100%	3.42	4	88%	3.67	4	100%	3.69	4	92%	3.29	4	86%	3.69	4	100%
Projects should promote and apply green planning principles and management systems which reduce and recycle waste and minimise pollution.	3.38	3	94%	0.60	49	3.36	4	89%	3.42	3	100%	3.25	3	100%	3.46	4	92%	3.43	3	100%	3.38	4	85%
Project investors/developers should ensure that they are conversant with the environmental principles governing developments and the importance afforded to environmental preservation/conservation in regional/local development plans and strategies.	3.49	4	94%	0.61	48	3.56	4	93%	3.42	3	96%	3.50	4	100%	3.54	4	92%	3.31	3	92%	3.62	4	92%
Management of the relationship with the landscape should be a critical element of all rural tourism projects which should accept accept the responsibility to sustain, and have limited impact on the quality of the landscape/natural environment.	3.51	4	92%	0.65	47	3.48	4	85%	3.54	4	100%	3.50	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.29	3	86%	3.65	4	92%
Projects should conserve energy and develop strategies for deployment of alternative energy sources.	3.29	3	90%	0.64	47	3.29	4	86%	3.29	3	96%	3.25	3	100%	3.31	3	92%	3.21	3	86%	3.38	4	85%
Projects should contribute to local pride in the environment, providing an incentive to local people to conserve the environment and promote higher environmental standards in their efforts to develop the tourism industry and attract visitors.	3.28	3	90%	0.64	46	3.23	3	89%	3.33	3	92%	3.08	3	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.07	3	79%	3.50	4	100%
Projects should utilise development/design standards, which are sensitive to and capitalise on natural features of the area, enhancing the profile of the locality.	3.45	4	88%	0.70	45	3.59	4	89%	3.29	3	88%	3.17	3	83%	3.69	4	92%	3.38	3	92%	3.54	4	85%
Projects should take steps to try to overcome, or mitigate, negative traffic impacts.	3.20	3	86%	0.66	44	3.34	4	89%	3.04	3	83%	3.17	3	92%	3.38	4	85%	3.3	3	92%	3.00	3	77%
Consideration should be made with regard to traffic generation to and within the destination area as a result of a project	3.15	3	86%	0.65	43	3.24	3	88%	3.04	3	83%	3.25	3	100%	2.92	3	77%	3.38	3	92%	3.04	3	75%
Consideration should be given to architectural plans and physical design in the context of locally recognised/approved norms and the incorporation of local ethnic designs and artefacts into buildings.	3.11	3	86%	0.69	43	3.13	3	81%	3.08	3	92%	3.08	3	92%	3.46	4	92%	2.69	3	69%	3.19	3	92%

SA/BR =Full Panel

SA= South Africans

BR- British

x- Arithmetic Mean

M- Mode

%- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4

SD- Standard Deviation

FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4.

APPENDIX 12

RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

PROPOSED CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Projects should be financially viable and structured so that they are in a position to attain economic self-sufficiency and self-sustainability beyond the start-up period.	3.81	4	100%	0.40	52	3.79	4	100%	3.83	4	100%	3.92	4	100%	3.77	4	100%	3.71	4	100%	3.85	4	100%
Projects should have financial plans, with accurate cost and revenue targets based on realistic predictions.	3.81	4	100%	0.40	52	3.79	4	100%	3.83	4	100%	3.75	4	100%	3.85	4	100%	3.79	4	100%	3.85	4	100%
Up-to-date, long-term business plans, which concentrate on basic deliverables should be formulated and adhered to.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	50	3.71	4	96%	3.70	4	100%	3.67	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.71	4	100%	3.83	4	100%
A robust, appropriate strategic marketing plan based on up-to-date market research should be formulated.	3.69	4	98%	0.51	51	3.79	4	100%	3.58	4	96%	3.50	4	92%	3.69	4	100%	3.79	4	100%	3.77	4	100%
Where relevant financial plans should identify funding opportunities and develop action plans to ensure continuous resource mobilisation apposite to the level of funding required for project implementation and maintenance.	3.54	4	98%	0.54	49	3.56	4	100%	3.52	4	96%	3.50	4	92%	3.54	4	100%	3.50	3	100%	3.62	4	100%
Feasibility studies/force-field analyses, which assess the potential long-term feasibility and viability of projects, should be undertaken.	3.71	4	98%	0.50	48	3.73	4	96%	3.68	4	100%	3.73	4	100%	3.69	4	92%	3.68	4	100%	3.75	4	100%
Attention to detail should be accorded to all aspects of planning, logistics and implementation.	3.57	4	98%	0.55	48	3.68	4	96%	3.43	3	100%	3.42	3	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.61	4	100%	3.63	4	100%
Projects should be justifiable in terms of cost-benefit ratio, profitability and short and medium-term return on investment.	3.65	4	98%	0.53	47	3.73	4	96%	3.55	4	100%	3.70	4	100%	3.77	4	100%	3.64	4	100%	3.45	4	91%
Sufficient capital should be set aside to make provision for pre-opening expenses such as start-up marketing or staff training.	3.69	4	96%	0.54	50	3.75	4	96%	3.63	4	96%	3.42	4	92%	3.85	4	100%	3.71	4	100%	3.77	4	92%
Projects should adopt efficient operational controls and financial management systems.	3.60	4	96%	0.57	50	3.68	4	96%	3.50	4	96%	3.25	3	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.57	4	93%	3.92	4	100%
Projects should aim to provide excellent service.	3.58	4	96%	0.57	50	3.71	4	93%	3.42	3	100%	3.58	4	100%	3.54	4	92%	3.36	3	93%	3.85	4	100%
Quality management measures should be incorporated in all aspects of project execution.	3.59	4	96%	0.59	47	3.65	4	96%	3.52	4	96%	3.58	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.43	4	93%	3.77	4	100%
Funds for adequate marketing should be realistically estimated and allocated when planning operational expenditure.	3.56	4	96%	0.57	50	3.64	4	93%	3.46	3	100%	3.50	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.50	4	93%	3.62	4	100%
Revenue projections should take into account seasonality and be based on current volumes of business in the region.	3.63	4	94%	0.60	49	3.68	4	93%	3.58	4	96%	3.33	3	92%	3.85	4	100%	3.71	4	93%	3.62	4	92%
The safety and security of tourists should be considered of paramount importance.	3.63	4	94%	0.60	48	3.75	4	93%	3.48	4	96%	3.64	4	100%	3.69	4	92%	3.50	4	86%	3.69	4	100%
The operating/maintenance costs of projects should be adequately estimated and provided for.	3.60	4	94%	0.66	49	3.54	4	93%	3.67	4	96%	3.50	4	92%	3.54	4	92%	3.57	4	93%	3.77	4	100%
Capital costs and cash flow analysis should be detailed and realistic in view of the long development period before tourism projects begin to show dividends.	3.54	4	94%	0.67	49	3.71	4	100%	3.33	4	88%	3.25	4	83%	3.69	4	100%	3.50	3	100%	3.69	4	92%
Potential problems should be resolved before projects are implemented (for example, security of land tenure, provision for housing and community services for employees).	3.59	4	94%	0.61	48	3.64	4	93%	3.52	4	96%	3.67	4	100%	3.62	4	85%	3.43	4	93%	3.67	4	100%
There should be consultation with the relevant authorities at an early stage of proposal planning in order to secure participation in or approval of projects and facilitate collaboration between project managers and such authorities.	3.56	4	94%	0.61	47	3.57	4	93%	3.54	4	95%	3.67	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.54	4	100%	3.42	4	83%
Active response should be made to complaints from tourists.	3.56	4	92%	0.64	48	3.57	4	89%	3.54	4	96%	3.58	4	100%	3.46	4	85%	3.50	4	93%	3.69	4	92%
Appropriate existing and potential future target markets both for rural tourism in general and for the destination and project in particular should be identified, compared, quantified and qualified.	3.53	4	92%	0.64	47	3.61	4	93%	3.43	4	91%	3.73	4	100%	3.46	4	85%	3.43	4	93%	3.54	4	92%
The safety and security of host communities and project staff should be taken into account.	3.35	3	92%	0.62	48	3.64	4	100%	3.00	3	83%	3.25	4	83%	3.31	3	92%	3.43	3	100%	3.38	3	92%
The level of project attractiveness to tour operators and tour guides and the degree of tourism industry support should be ascertained.	3.41	4	92%	0.65	47	3.61	4	93%	3.19	3	91%	3.42	4	92%	3.46	4	92%	3.36	3	93%	3.42	4	92%
Comparable competitive tourism projects and their strengths and weaknesses should be identified.	3.32	3	92%	0.69	47	3.48	4	93%	3.13	3	92%	3.42	3	100%	3.31	4	85%	3.14	3	93%	3.42	4	92%
Vigilant attention should be given to ensuring the cleanliness of food preparation.	3.63	4	90%	0.66	47	3.50	4	82%	3.79	4	100%	3.67	4	100%	3.62	4	92%	3.43	4	79%	3.85	4	92%

PROPOSED CRITERIA	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Rural tourism projects should comply with regional/local land-use planning ensuring that new projects do not result in displacements in the area.	3.35	4	90%	0.76	47	3.32	3	93%	3.38	4	88%	3.67	4	100%	3.46	4	92%	3.07	3	87%	3.31	4	85%
Tourists should receive objective and honest information about all aspects of their visit.	3.60	4	90%	0.66	47	3.64	4	96%	3.54	4	83%	3.42	4	83%	3.54	4	85%	3.64	4	100%	3.77	4	92%
Marketing expertise should be available to projects either in-house or externally for facilitation in market planning and implementation.	3.48	4	90%	0.67	47	3.61	4	93%	3.33	4	88%	3.42	4	92%	3.38	4	85%	3.43	4	93%	3.69	4	92%
Evaluation of the degree of effectiveness, quality and appropriateness of marketing strategies and tactics should be undertaken.	3.38	4	90%	0.66	47	3.43	4	89%	3.33	3	92%	3.33	3	92%	3.38	3	92%	3.29	3	86%	3.54	4	92%
Projects should conduct their business honestly communicating business policies and inviting customers, suppliers and contractors to give feedback.	3.52	4	88%	0.75	46	3.61	4	89%	3.42	4	88%	3.67	4	100%	3.46	4	77%	3.50	4	86%	3.46	4	92%
Viable implementation plans, operating principles and management structures should be formulated to deal with issues such as the allocation of roles and responsibilities and the identification of key personnel.	3.35	4	88%	0.68	46	3.46	4	89%	3.21	3	88%	3.58	4	100%	3.00	3	77%	3.36	3	93%	3.46	4	85%
Projects should adopt an integrated approach with all plans synthesised into a coherent planning, delivery and monitoring model.	3.38	4	88%	0.75	45	3.55	4	89%	3.17	3	88%	3.58	4	100%	3.38	4	85%	3.29	4	79%	3.27	4	92%
Projects should develop marketing networks, partnerships and linkages with other regional ventures.	3.25	3	88%	0.66	45	3.52	4	96%	2.96	3	79%	3.09	3	82%	3.38	3	92%	3.14	3	86%	3.38	4	92%
Projects should demonstrate local hospitality and indigenous knowledge thereby engendering a more genuine welcome for visitors.	3.23	3	88%	0.65	46	3.32	3	89%	3.13	3	88%	3.17	3	92%	3.31	4	85%	2.93	3	79%	3.54	4	100%
Project investors and developers should adhere to government development and resource management guidelines (For example, consents required for water, subdivision, coastal development etc).	3.46	4	87%	0.87	45	3.50	4	86%	3.42	4	88%	3.75	4	100%	3.23	4	77%	3.53	4	87%	3.38	4	85%
Projects should have a well-developed and marketable theme.	3.29	4	87%	0.75	45	3.43	4	89%	3.13	3	83%	3.00	3	75%	3.31	4	85%	3.36	3	93%	3.46	4	92%
Alternative planning scenarios and support systems should be in place enabling unexpected problems to be dealt with.	3.23	3	87%	0.67	45	3.43	4	93%	3.00	3	79%	3.25	3	92%	3.15	3	85%	3.14	3	93%	3.38	4	77%
Project proponents should accept world tourism needs and standards, ensuring that products and services meet tourist demands and expectations within the parameters of the environment in which they are developed.	3.22	3	86%	0.74	43	3.41	4	93%	3.00	3	78%	3.09	3	82%	3.31	3	92%	3.08	3	71%	3.38	4	92%
Clean, comfortable accommodation should be of a type apposite to the experience, attractions and other facilities.	3.35	4	85%	0.79	44	3.32	4	79%	3.38	3	92%	3.33	3	92%	3.38	4	85%	2.93	3	71%	3.77	4	92%
The conceptual framework within which a project is developed should be attractive and subject to the regular assessments, fine-tuning and innovation required to ensure the constant growth/revitalisation demanded by the dynamics of tourism.	3.19	3	84%	0.71	41	3.43	4	89%	2.89	3	76%	3.10	3	90%	3.31	4	85%	3.14	3	86%	3.19	4	75%
Marketing plans should be compatible with the vision encompassed within the regional marketing co-operation strategy.	3.17	3	85%	0.73	44	3.29	3	89%	3.04	3	79%	3.25	4	83%	3.62	4	100%	3.00	3	86%	2.85	3	69%
Reservation and payment systems for tourists should be easy and efficient.	3.26	4	84%	0.81	43	3.66	4	96%	2.79	3	71%	2.75	3	67%	3.42	4	92%	3.14	3	86%	3.69	4	92%
Projects should be planned within a national/regional/local development policy, planning and regulatory context.	3.23	4	83%	0.83	43	3.25	4	79%	3.21	3	88%	3.50	4	83%	3.38	4	92%	3.29	3	93%	2.77	3	62%
Projects should be sound in terms of a source of trainable staff and personnel sustainability and in their ability to inject external expertise where skills are lacking.	3.20	3	82%	0.73	41	3.46	4	89%	2.86	3	73%	3.09	3	82%	3.25	4	75%	3.14	3	93%	3.31	4	77%
Projects should function as agents of human resource development with plans that make provision for purposeful, appropriate, employee training, multi-skilling and potential career pathing.	3.14	3	78%	0.86	39	3.48	4	93%	2.74	3	61%	2.91	4	64%	3.38	4	85%	3.08	3	85%	3.15	4	77%

SA/BR =Full Panel

SA= South Africans

BR- British

x- Arithmetic Mean

M- Mode

%- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4

SD- Standard Deviation

FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4

APPENDIX 13 RESULTS DELPHI SURVEY EVALUATION UTILIZATION CRITERIA

	SA/ BR x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	BR x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Similar, successful rural tourism projects should where possible be used for comparative purposes.	3.22	3	88%	0.64	45	3.36	3	93%	3.04	3	83%	3.08	3	83%	3.23	3	85%	3.29	3	93%	3.25	3	92%
Lessons learned from project evaluation should be transferred to other rural tourism projects.	3.25	3	88%	0.72	44	3.45	4	96%	3.00	3	78%	3.17	3	83%	3.23	3	85%	2.92	3	100%	3.13	4	82%
Results of rural tourism project evaluation should be fed back into the planning/policy process.	3.25	4	81%	0.76	42	3.36	4	82%	3.13	3	79%	3.58	4	92%	3.15	4	69%	3.07	3	80%	3.23	3	85%

SA/BR =Full Panel SA= South Africans BR- British x- Arithmetic Mean M- Mode %- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4 SD- Standard Deviation FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4

APPENDIX 14

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS

	SA/ UK x	M	%	SD	FQ	SA x	M	%	UK x	M	%	A x	M	%	P x	M	%	C x	M	%	O x	M	%
Local Councils/Authorities	3.63	4	98%	0.53	50	3.71	4	100%	3.52	4	96%	3.58	4	100%	3.85	4	100%	3.69	4	100%	3.38	3	92%
Funding Agencies	3.59	4	96%	0.57	49	3.64	4	100%	3.52	4	91%	3.83	4	100%	3.38	4	92%	3.46	3	100%	3.69	4	92%
National Parks/Protected Areas within the region	3.50	4	94%	0.61	47	3.63	4	93%	3.35	3	96%	3.64	4	100%	3.54	4	85%	3.38	3	92%	3.38	4	85%
Regional/District Councils	3.48	4	90%	0.68	45	3.57	4	89%	3.36	3	91%	3.50	4	100%	3.75	4	100%	3.46	3	100%	3.31	4	77%
Local Tourism Organisations	3.40	4	88%	0.69	44	3.57	4	93%	3.20	3	82%	3.42	4	92%	3.69	4	92%	3.15	3	85%	3.35	4	83%
Regional/Provincial Tourism Boards	3.24	3	84%	0.72	42	3.36	4	86%	3.09	3	82%	3.58	4	100%	3.46	4	92%	3.00	2	62%	3.23	4	77%
Community Organisations/Committees	3.31	4	82%	0.76	42	3.46	4	82%	3.13	3	83%	3.42	4	92%	3.35	4	83%	3.15	4	77%	3.12	4	67%
Heritage Management Organisations within the region	3.18	3	80%	0.74	41	3.36	4	82%	2.96	3	78%	3.27	3	91%	3.15	4	77%	3.23	3	85%	3.31	4	85%
Traditional Leaders	3.19	4	80%	0.79	40	3.41	4	85%	2.91	3	74%	3.25	3	92%	3.19	3	83%	3.15	3	85%	3.15	4	62%
Regional Tourism Organisations	3.25	4	80%	0.81	39	3.41	4	85%	3.07	4	73%	3.33	3	92%	3.38	3	92%	2.85	2	62%	3.15	4	77%
Tourism Industry Organisations (Tour Operator/Hotelier etc)	2.96	3	72%	0.73	36	3.11	3	79%	2.77	3	64%	3.42	3	100%	3.19	4	75%	2.75	3	58%	2.77	2	54%
Political Leadership (Ward Councillors, Mayors, MP/MECs)	3.03	3	71%	0.84	35	3.13	4	69%	2.91	3	74%	3.25	4	75%	2.85	4	62%	2.85	3	69%	2.85	3	69%
NGOs involved in the Local area	2.94	3	69%	0.90	35	3.07	4	75%	2.78	3	61%	3.27	3	91%	2.92	3	69%	2.62	3	54%	3.08	3	77%
Other local business organisations	2.76	3	62%	0.74	31	2.96	3	79%	2.50	2	41%	2.82	3	64%	2.92	3	69%	2.38	2	38%	2.92	3	77%

SA/BR =Full Panel SA= South Africans BR- British x- Arithmetic Mean M- Mode %- Percentage Rating Criteria 3 or 4 SD- Standard Deviation FQ- Frequency Rating 3 or 4

INDEX OF CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS

	SOCIOCULTURAL CRITERIA	SOCIOECONOMIC CRITERIA	ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA
1	Projects should be ethical, with suitable negotiating frameworks and fair agreements entered into between developers/landowners and custodians/ local communities to facilitate project development.	Projects should not lead to demands for new infrastructure which have unacceptable social, environmental or economic impacts on the area.	Projects should ensure that their use of water is efficient and that neither they, nor any of their activities, pollute water supplies or catchment areas.
2	Project development and marketing should be managed in such a way as to generate an appropriate scale of visitation to the region thus avoiding negative environmental, social and economic impacts.	Projects should complement, as opposed to conflicting with, existing programmes.	Project developers/operators should demonstrate an awareness of the potential environmental impacts of their projects through the formulation of acceptable environmental management plans and adaptive environmental management systems.
3	There should be effective communication and liaison between stakeholder groups/local communities to ensure understanding of key messages and remove barriers.	Projects should contribute to local money flows and support economic linkages and local supply networks, creating stable local markets for local products, retaining tourism spend in the local area and adding to the sustainability of local shops and jobs.	Projects should not be either visually or audibly obtrusive to other developments or the surrounding area.
4	Stakeholders should have overall clarity and understanding of the aims, goals and rewards of projects and their intended impacts, without raising unrealistic expectations.	Projects should add value in meeting the basic needs of economic development and contribute, both directly and indirectly, to the economic growth of the area.	Projects should fulfil EIA requirements and comply with environmental legislation in both the construction and operational phases of the development.
5	Investors/developers should be aware that indigenous people attach strong cultural/spiritual values to land and should thus be consulted at an early stage when investment decisions could possibly involve land which is spiritually significant.	Projects should be well integrated and work in partnership with other economic sectors in the wider locality, including more traditional rural economic provision and activities.	An EIA/integrated environmental audit should be undertaken at the outset to identify appropriate tourism options and ascertain the compatibility of projects with the surrounding land use, environment and natural resources.
6	Projects should contribute to host community confidence and pride in their culture.	Projects should be dynamic with opportunities to identify and develop new entrepreneurial opportunities.	Projects should promote and apply green planning principles and management systems which reduce and recycle waste and minimise pollution.
7	Projects should not impact negatively on the cultural integrity of the area eroding, corrupting or commodifying the local cultural resources and indigenous culture.	Tourist demand and consumption should not lead to indirect economic disbenefit resulting from overuse or increased pressure on local infrastructural systems.	Project investors/developers should ensure that they are conversant with the environmental principles governing developments and the importance afforded to environmental preservation/conservation in regional/local development plans and strategies.
8	Projects should impact positively on the indigenous host culture by demonstrating respect and support for human diversity.	Projects should include the enhancement of the indigenous skills base, with emphasis on skills transfer at all levels.	Management of the relationship with the landscape should be a critical element of all rural tourism projects which should accept the responsibility to sustain, and have limited impact on the quality of the landscape/natural environment.
9	If projects will attract more visitors an assessment should be made of the type of activities undertaken and the resultant pressure on local resources and services..	Projects should enhance the tourist experience and increase visitor satisfaction levels by providing an adequate mix of new high quality, interesting, educational experiences for visitors, thus gratifying their expectations.	Projects should conserve energy and develop strategies for deployment of alternative energy sources.
10	Projects should be based on authentic local characteristics and values and reflect/reinforce the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the area rather than promoting global homogeneity.	Projects should encourage self-reliance and community interest in genuine participation by means of employment, investment or growth, rather than quick money or empowerment tax (i.e. SWEAT equity- benefits linked to responsibilities).	Projects should contribute to local pride in the environment, providing an incentive for local people to conserve the environment and promote higher environmental standards in their efforts to develop the tourism industry and attract visitors.
11	Developers should be alert to the potential social impacts of projects and their level of acceptability/unacceptability to local people.	New rural tourism development projects should expand the product base of traditional (or where applicable new) tourist routes, enhancing their potential to attract and hold visitors in the area for extended periods.	Projects should utilise development/design standards, which are sensitive to and capitalise on natural features of the area, enhancing the profile of the locality.
12	Projects should be compatible with the resources and quality of the host location, engendering resident 'pride-in-place' and leading to greater care of the natural environment and improved maintenance of settlements.	The ownership structure and beneficiaries of projects and their financial gains should be taken into account e.g. the nature and scale of stakeholder partnerships, joint venture participation, trusts, community, co-operative, state, private sector/ commercial or employee ownership.	Projects should take steps to try to overcome, or mitigate, negative traffic impacts.
13	Rural tourism projects should not have a negative social/environmental impact by virtue of outdoor recreational activities undertaken by tourists.	Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should generate and retain a range of diverse, quality, sustainable, direct and indirect employment opportunities for local people across a broad spectrum of talents and skills.	Consideration should be made with regard to traffic generation to and within the destination area as a result of a project.
14	Projects should be appropriate to the development needs of the community.	Rural tourism projects should help to reverse rural decline and contribute to sustainable rural development in the local area.	Consideration should be given to architectural plans and physical design in the context of locally recognised/approved norms and the incorporation of local ethnic designs and artefacts into buildings.
15	Project developers should work with other organisations and the community in preserving and promoting local heritage, historical sites and architectural landmarks, where possible offering economic support.	A strong relationship/working partnership between a project and other existing tourism enterprises and structures should be secured, enabling it to form an integral part of existing provision and activities in the wider locality.	
16	Interpretation should be provided of the attractions/experiences around which projects are located.	Projects should make a viable contribution to improvement in local wealth, income generation and per capita disposable income.	
17	Projects should provide linkages to and promote local crafts and skills, offering encouragement, particularly to the young, to learn and revitalise local arts and crafts, producing items which are unique to the area.	Projects and their ancillary business opportunities should help to alleviate long-term unemployment.	

	SOCIOCULTURAL CRITERIA	SOCIOECONOMIC CRITERIA	ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA
18	The development of rural tourism should stimulate a more diverse, vibrant society increasing the viability of isolated communities.	Projects should not lead to increased community dependence on external influences – grants, an increase in economic vulnerability/instability, or the spread of risk through diversification.	
19	There should be a transparent facilitation process amongst stakeholder groups/local communities in order to deal with power relationships between stakeholders and resolve issues of conflict.	Rural tourism projects should lead to community empowerment through participation in the construction, management, operational supply systems and contribution to the tourism product.	
20	The level of projects potential contribution to the achievement of long term plans/ambitions for the host location should be considered.	Tourists visiting projects should through their demand for goods and services and their resultant spending contribute to the generation of these commodities in the surrounding economy.	
21	The impact on the local community if a project is not developed should be ascertained (socially/economically/environmentally).	Projects should be able to meet all the challenges of transformation, including resource transfers, as they develop.	
22	Cultural awareness programmes should be introduced for tourists in order to endorse their responsibility to observe and show respect for the norms, practices and values of the host community.	Rural tourism projects should encourage equity participation and fair, reasonable, equitable flow and distribution of benefits and costs (economic and otherwise) to local communities.	
23		Projects should assist in developing/empowering local entrepreneurs for participation in ancillary business start-up (e.g.transport, attractions) and a range of other local entrepreneurial activity.	
24		Projects should act as agents in helping to diversify the local economy.	

INDEX OF CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS

	PROJECT PLANNING	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	MARKETING
1	Projects should be financially viable and structured so that they are in a position to attain economic self-sufficiency and self-sustainability beyond the start-up period.	Projects should adopt efficient operational controls and financial management systems.	A robust, appropriate strategic marketing plan based on up-to-date market research should be formulated.
2	Projects should have realistic financial plans, with accurate cost and revenue targets based on realistic predictions.	Projects should aim to provide excellent service.	Funds for adequate marketing should be realistically estimated and allocated when planning operational expenditure.
3	Up-to-date, long-term business plans, which concentrate on basic deliverables should be formulated and adhered to.	Quality management measures should be incorporated in all aspects of project execution.	Appropriate existing and potential future target markets both for rural tourism in general and for the destination and project in particular should be identified, compared, quantified and qualified.
4	Where relevant financial plans should identify funding opportunities and develop action plans to ensure continuous resource mobilisation apposite to the level of funding required for project implementation and maintenance.	The safety and security of tourists should be considered of paramount importance.	The level of project attractiveness to tour operators and tour guides and the degree of tourism industry support should be ascertained.
5	Feasibility studies/force-field analyses, which assess the potential long-term feasibility and viability of projects, should be undertaken.	Active response should be made to complaints from tourists.	Comparable competitive tourism projects and their strengths and weaknesses should be identified.
6	Attention to detail should be accorded to all aspects of planning, logistics and implementation.	The safety and security of host communities and project staff should be taken into account.	Marketing expertise should be available to projects either in-house or externally for facilitation in market planning, training and implementation.
7	Projects should be justifiable in terms of cost-benefit ratio, profitability and short and medium-term return on investment.	Vigilant attention should be given to ensuring the cleanliness of food preparation.	Evaluation of the degree of effectiveness, quality and appropriateness of marketing strategies and tactics should be undertaken.
8	Sufficient capital should be set aside to make provision for pre-opening expenses such as start-up marketing or staff training.	Tourists should receive objective and honest information about all aspects of their visit.	Projects should develop marketing networks, partnerships and linkages with other regional ventures.
9	Revenue projections should take into account seasonality and be based on current volumes of business in the region.	Projects should conduct their business honestly communicating business policies and inviting customers, suppliers and contractors to give feedback.	Projects should have a well-developed and marketable theme.
10	The operating/maintenance costs of projects should be adequately estimated and provided for.	Projects should demonstrate local hospitality and indigenous knowledge thereby engendering a more genius welcome for visitors.	Marketing plans should be compatible with the vision encompassed within the regional marketing co-operation strategy.
11	Capital costs and cash flow analysis should be detailed and realistic in view of the long development period before tourism projects begin to show dividends.	Project proponents should accept world tourism needs and standards, ensuring that products and services meet tourist demands and expectations within the parameters of the environment in which they are developed.	
12	Potential problems should be resolved before projects are implemented (for example, security of land tenure, provision for housing and community services for employees.	Clean, comfortable accommodation should be of a type apposite to the experience, attractions and other facilities.	
13	There should be consultation with the relevant authorities at an early stage of proposal planning in order to secure participation in or approval of projects and facilitate collaboration between project managers and such authorities.	Reservation and payment systems for tourists should be easy and efficient.	
14	Rural tourism projects should comply with regional/local land-use planning ensuring that new projects do not result in displacements in the area.	Projects should be sound in terms of a source of trainable staff and personnel sustainability and in their ability to inject external expertise where skills are lacking.	
15	Management structures should be formulated to deal with issues such as the allocation of roles and responsibilities and the identification of key personnel.	Projects should function as agents of human resource development with plans that make provision for purposeful, appropriate, employee training.	
16	Projects should adopt an integrated approach with all plans synthesised into a coherent planning, delivery and monitoring model.		
17	Project investors and developers should adhere to government development and resource management guidelines. (For example, consents required for water, subdivision, coastal development etc).		
18	Alternative planning scenarios and support systems should be in place enabling unexpected problems to be dealt with.		
19	Projects should be planned within a national/regional/local development policy, planning and regulatory context.		
20	The conceptual framework within which a project is developed should be attractive and subject to the regular assessments, fine-tuning and innovation required to ensure the constant growth/revitalisation demanded by the dynamics of tourism.		